

Farrakhan challenges critics to investigate his Mideast trip

CHICAGO (R) — Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan was challenged the U.S. government to investigate his controversial trip to Africa and the Middle East and said he intends to accept financial help offered him by Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

"I call you bluff. Bring me before Congress. It's time for the showdown," Mr. Farrakhan told followers in a four-hour speech late Sunday, his annual "Savior's Day" address that drew thousands to a stadium at the University of Illinois Chicago campus.

"I want to bring me before Congress and ask me to register as a foreign agent. And I'm going to call the role of how many senators are honorary members of the Israeli Knesset," he added.

Mr. Farrakhan returned to the United States last week from a 20-nation tour during which he was attacked by the U.S. State Department for

"Cavorting with dictators" in Iraq, Libya and Iran — so-called "pariah" states the United States has tried to isolate.

At least one member of Congress has also called for a government investigation into his travels.

In the course of his trip Mr. Farrakhan was quoted as saying God would destroy the United States "at the hands of the Muslims" and he reportedly won an offer of millions of dollars of financial help from Mr. Qadhafi.

"Qadhafi is a revolutionary. He's my friend. He's my brother," Mr. Farrakhan said.

He said those who blame the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 are "liars". The bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, killed 259 passengers and crew and 11 people on the ground.

"Qadhafi is hated because he's the leader of a small

country that is rich. But he uses his money to finance liberation struggles... He said 'brother the wealth of Libya I will put behind the Nation of Islam'. That's more than a building and I'm going to accept it," Mr. Farrakhan said.

He said Libya has been financing struggles against imperialists, Zionists, oppressors and colonialists.

"You must be all of them," he said, turning to the reporters covering his speech. He later branded members of the news media "wicked demons."

Mr. Farrakhan also denied news reports from Iran that he had called the United States a "great Satan."

"I'm not an enemy of America. I never said America would be destroyed at the hands of Muslims. America is a preserved area. God has allowed every superpower to be set down by America. And he left America for him-

self," Mr. Farrakhan said.

But he said Jews had "wrapped their tentacles around the U.S. government."

Over the years Mr. Farrakhan's incendiary remarks have gained him indictment by both whites and mainstream blacks. He once called Judaism a "gutter religion" and referred to Adolf Hitler as a "great" man.

But his successful organization of last year's Million Man March on Washington — a peaceful demonstration that drew hundreds of thousands of black men to the capital to discuss commitment, responsibility and leadership — won him new respect.

The State Department had questioned whether Mr. Farrakhan had informed it properly of his intention to visit Iraq, Libya and Iran but he re-entered the country last week without incident.



ISRAELI LIGHTS MEMORIAL CANDLES AT SITE OF BOMB BLAST: An Israeli man lights memorial candles on Monday at the site where a Hamas suicide bomber blew up a city bus killing 26 people on Sunday. The sign, erected by right-wing Israelis, reads 191 deaths since 13/9/93, which is the date of the signing of the Oslo accords between Israel and the PLO (Reuters photo)

Opposition boycott hits Sudan's 1st elections since '89

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The start of campaigning for Sudan's first general elections since a military coup seven years ago has been hit by an opposition boycott, with the government's leading opponent describing the poll as "window dressing for dictatorship."

Four days after the official launch of campaigning, the only election posters on the streets of Khartoum on Monday were the government's calling on people to turn out for the vote.

So far, no political rallies have been held and the television and radio spots promised to all the candidates have yet to appear.

Current head of state Omar al-Bashir, who headed the 1989 coup that established Islamic rule, is expected to easily beat out a

group of 40 hopefuls, most of them unknown, running against him for president.

Opposition groups and southern rebels turned down an invitation from Gen. Bashir to participate in the vote and have declared a boycott of the elections, due to last from March 6 to 17.

The poll will also select 275 members of a 400-seat parliament to replace the current appointed body.

But candidates will be running without political parties, banned by the coup as "an important from the West and alien to Sudan."

The Popular National Congress, representing the states and professional groups, has already elected deputies to fill the remaining 125 seats.

The first campaign advertisement appeared in the independent Akhbar Al Yom

daily on Sunday, a full page for presidential candidate Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz Zubeir — a violation of election rules allowing only quarter-page displays.

Sadeq Al Mahdi, the former prime minister deposed by General Bashir's coup and now the top opposition member still in the country, denounced the vote as "window dressing for dictatorship" and called for a "national unity government" to be formed to run "free elections."

Nevertheless, one of Gen. Bashir's competitors, Abdul Majid Sultan Kajabi, known mainly as a former champion swimmer, told AFP: "I am confident I will win the race."

A total of 911 candidates are running from 15 of Sudan's 16 northern states, according to the elections

commission, which has yet to announce the remaining lists.

Among them is Hassan Tourabi, the spiritual head of the Islamic regime, who lost in the last vote in 1986, but now faces three unknown competitors in his Khartoum district.

Around 50 candidates are running unopposed, including the current first vice premier, Al Zubeir Mohammad Salih, and Labour Minister Al Tayeb Ibrahim Mohammad Khair.

There are 275 districts throughout Sudan, but voting will be carried out in only 35 of the 45 districts in the south due to the ongoing civil war between government troops and Christian-animalist rebels.

The president will appoint deputies for the remaining southern districts, sources in

the election commission said.

Emergency laws bar single candidates from staging rallies during the campaign, although groups of candidates can hold common gatherings under the supervision of the electoral commission.

The high number of candidates swamped the election committee, which had to back off an original offer to help finance each campaign and then convinced nine presidential hopefuls to drop out of the race, committee sources said.

The government claims the elections will usher the "transition from military to constitutional rule." Sudan has been on a see-saw between shaky democracies and army coups since independence in 1956.

Turkey's rightists resume talks on coalition

ANKARA (AFP) — The leaders of Turkey's two main conservative parties resumed efforts to agree a coalition Monday after the pro-Islamic Welfare Party was sidelined at the weekend.

"We will do everything possible to create this government," caretaker Prime Minister Tansu Ciller — who talked to Motherland Party leader Mesut Yilmaz by telephone — told a meeting of her True Path Party executive.

Simultaneously, Mr. Yilmaz attended a Motherland committee meeting to discuss how to form a coalition.

The two leaders were expected to meet as early as Wednesday after a 24-hour visit to Rome by Ms. Ciller.

Two months after inconclusive parliamentary elections, the two conservative rivals are attempting once again to join forces, after negotiations broke down Saturday between Motherland and Welfare, led by Necmettin Erbakan.

None of the three parties emerged with an absolute majority when Turks went to the polls Dec. 24 to elect a new parliament, although Welfare, which has been critical of Turkey's close Western ties, captured the most seats with 158.

Motherland and True Path had sought a coalition in January, wishing to block Welfare, but that failed due to the intense personal rivalry between Ms. Ciller and Mr. Yilmaz.

Ms. Ciller, who still runs Turkey's day-to-day affairs as interim premier, said Saturday they could yet form a new coalition, after expressing her relief over the Welfare-Motherland breakdown.

She said the future lay in a conservative alliance, although observers say their rivalry might necessitate a compromise figure coming in as premier.

NEW IN BRIEF

Tunisian, Italian boats exchange gunfire

MAZARA DEL VALLO, Italy (AFP) — A Tunisian patrol boat fired on a Sicilian fishing boat Sunday, but gave up a high seas chase when an Italian naval vessel fired a warning shot across its bows, the ANSA news agency said.

The Tunisian launch attempted to intercept the trawler, "Cesare Rustico," which had left the fishing port of Mazara del Vallo with eight crew on board at around 8 a.m. (0700 GMT), according to the Italian navy. Machine gun fire was sprayed along the cabins of the Sicilian boat but no-one injured, it said. Italian authorities say they tried to establish radio contact with the Tunisian boat with no success before firing several warning shots across the vessel's bows. Soon after, the Tunisians retreated from the scene. The incident occurred in international waters in the Sicilian channel north of Cape Bon off the coast of Tunisia. Sicilian fishermen have been boarded often in the past by the Tunisian coastguard and have had their boats or catch confiscated for illegal fishing.

Bosnian PM to visit Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Bosnian Prime Minister Hasan Muratovic is to pay a three-day official visit to Iran on Saturday to discuss bilateral ties and Islamic affairs, a newspaper reported here Monday. Mr. Muratovic will hold talks with President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Vice-President Hassan Habibi and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, the Iran News said. Bilateral relations, the Balkan issues and Islamic affairs are on the agenda of the talks, it added. The English-language daily said the two countries were likely to discuss Iranian help to the war-ravaged country to reconstruct itself. The Islamic republic has repeatedly expressed support for Bosnian Muslims and its readiness to provide assistance. "Some specific plans will be finalised in this direction," the paper said. Iran attaches "great importance" to the visit by Mr. Muratovic, who will be in charge of the reconstruction programme in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it added.

Turkish industry pioneer Koc dies aged 95

ANKARA (R) — Pioneering Turkish industrialist Vehbi Koc has died at the age of 95, the Turkish press said on Monday. Mr. Koc, rags-to-riches founder of the giant Koc Holding, died of a heart attack while on holiday in the southern city of Antalya on Sunday, the papers said. The Koc group of more than 80 firms encompasses the Tofas Automobile Company, domestic appliance maker Arcelik and highly successful chain of supermarkets, Mr. Koc handed over the reins of his business empire to son Rahmi 1984.

20 arrested for antiques smuggling

TEHRAN (AFP) — Police have arrested 20 people for illegal excavation and smuggling antiques out of Iran, a newspaper reported Monday. The suspects were members of a gang that secured the help of local people in unearthing treasures in villages in western Ilam province, Jomhuri Islami daily said without giving the date of the arrests. Among antiques discovered was a sword with a human head from the second century B.C. and two human statues and a statue of a mouse from ancient periods, it said. Iran, which considers archaeological finds as national treasures, has stepped up the fight against smuggling, a common practice during the 1980-1988 war against Iraq. The authorities introduced the death penalty in May for people involved in illegal trade in national and cultural treasures. However, illegal excavations and trafficking in historical art objects are still common in Iran and newspapers regularly report police seizures of artifacts.

Lebanon snatches agent from under Israel's nose

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese army intelligence operatives dragged the whisky bottle of a wanted Mossad agent and snatched him from Israel's South Lebanon occupation zone, security sources and press reports said on Monday.

Taking a leaf from the Israeli secret service's book, Lebanese agents last week seized Ahmad Hallaq, a Lebanese wanted for a 1994 blast that killed three people in Beirut and smuggled him out of the zone in the boot of a car, the sources said.

Mr. Hallaq was sentenced to death in absentia in June 1995. The Beirut court said he carried out the December 1994 bombing on orders from Mossad to kill Fuad Moughniyeh, a Hizbollah (Party of God) security official and brother of Lebanon's most wanted 1980s kidnapper of Westerners.

Fuad and two others were killed in the blast in Hizbollah stronghold in southern Beirut.

This was the first time Lebanese agents are known to have taken a wanted man from under the noses of the Israelis, who have an estimated 1,000 troops backed by a 3,000-strong local militia, patrolling the 15-

kilometre wide border zone.

Israel has mounted several commando operations into Lebanon to kill or kidnap Palestinian or Lebanese guerrilla leaders.

It is still holding Hizbollah cleric Sheikh Abdul Karim Obeid seized in 1989 and Mustapha Dirani, leader of the pro-Iranian Faithful Resistance seized by Israeli commandos from the eastern Bekaa Valley in May 1994.

The security sources confirmed a report in Beirut's leftist daily Al Safir saying the operation began two months ago when surveillance agents in the zone spotted Mr. Hallaq and informed army intelligence.

"The elements collaborating with the Lebanese army were given the necessary equipment," the newspaper said.

"Hallaq was drugged after a special drug was put in the whisky bottle he was drinking from. He was carried in the boot of a car that took him to the liberated areas through one of the checkpoints," it said.

Sources in the Israeli-held border zone, where Mr. Hallaq fled a day after the 1994 blast, confirmed his disappearance last week but gave no further details.

Kuwait marks liberation with low-key celebrations

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait marked the fifth anniversary of its Gulf war liberation with a national holiday on Monday but banned celebrations in remembrance of hundreds of Kuwaitis still missing from Iraq's 1990-91 occupation.

Relatives of the missing draped skyscrapers in giant neon flags and yellow ribbons and wound yellow material around palm trees to back demands for more efforts to discover their fate.

"Kuwait is back on its feet, but my family is not," said businessman Talal Salem, whose brother Jamal has not been seen since he was arrested by Iraqis at the end of the Gulf war.

"I don't feel particularly happy about the anniversary because I feel not enough has been done towards the release of the Kuwaiti hostages."

Kuwait, a Gulf oil-exporting state of 1.8 million people, wants Iraq to account for more than 600 Kuwaitis including women and children who went missing during the seven-month occupation.

Kuwait and its ally the United States say a full account-

ing is one of several terms Iraq must meet before tough economic sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion can be lifted.

Iraq has said it has freed all those it captured during the crisis but has promised to continue to look at the issue.

The emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, left on Monday for talks in Washington with U.S. President Bill Clinton expected to focus on Gulf security and a perceived threat from Iraq.

The government headed by the ruling Sabah family has said the missing people are its top priority. But many Kuwaitis say the government could do more to win freedom for the missing.

Few diplomats expect that all 600 are still alive. But they do not dismiss the possibility that several dozen or even several hundred remain alive in captivity in Iraqi prisons.

Kuwaitis still seethe about Iraq's 1990 lightning invasion and say they will never regain peace of mind while Iraqi President Saddam Hussein remains in power.

"This day five years ago was the happiest minute for our lives," said scientist Hassan Nasrullah. "But just a

few days ago we saw new evidence of how brutal that regime is."

He was referring to the killing of two top Iraqi defectors on their return to Baghdad from six months' exile in Jordan.

"Imagine the constant fear of having this big monster living next door," Mr. Nasrullah said. "The longer this man stays in power the longer we will have this trauma about this man living in our backyard."

"I hope God will punish the Iraqis in the same way that they treated our people," said Hikmat Nasser, who was 11 years old when he spent 55 days in Iraqi detention during the occupation.

But oil worker Mohammad Sarhan said his experience of Iraqis who worked in Kuwait in the occupation showed him that ordinary Iraqis had no choice but to submit to President Saddam's iron rule.

"I became quite close to them. They didn't know why they were in Kuwait. But they thought that if they didn't take part in the occupation they'd be killed by their government. So I feel bitter about Saddam, but not about Iraqis in general."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77311-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Iris — The Happy Professor

14:15 Captain Planet

14:40 Jonny Quest

15:00 Spirit of Adventure

15:30 Scientific Eye

16:10 Okavango

17:00 Ordy

17:15 Children's programme — Cupid

17:30 Serie — Les Compagnons De L'Aventure

18:00 Varieties — Celine Dion

19:00 Magazine — Ustual

19:15 News Headlines

19:30 You Bet Your Life

20:00 Doc — Oriental Rugs

20:25 The Bold and the Beautiful

21:00 Drama — Harry

22:00 News In English

22:25 Three Sovereigns from Sarah

23:15 Feature Film: "Going Under Ground"

PRAYER TIMES

06:45 Sunrise

06:02 Sunrise

11:49 Dhuhr

15:03 Asr

17:35 Maghreb

18:52 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Sweetish, Tel: 810740

Assembly of God Church, Tel: 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel: 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel: 637447

De la Salle Church Tel: 661757

Terrassanta Church Tel: 622346

Church of the Annunciation Tel: 623541

Anglican Church Tel: 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel: 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel: 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel: 771751

Amman International Church Tel: 625226

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 624328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel: 845457

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel: 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel: 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel: 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures are expected to drop with a chance for scattered showers in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom and winds becoming westerly moderate to active. In Agaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Min./Max. temp. 4/11

Amman 10/20

Aqaba 3/15

Deserts 3/15

Jordan Valley 9/19

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 13, Aqaba 21, Humidity readings: Amman 59 per cent, Aqaba 41 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Ghaleb Zawaideh 736111

Dr. Fakher Belbelchi 63412

Dr. Mahmoud Amir 888883

Dr. Khalil Al Tashq 757253

Ferdows pharmacy 778336

Al Asema pharmacy 637155

Nairookh pharmacy 623672

Yacoub pharmacy 636734

Shmeisani pharmacy 644945

Nairookh pharmacy 623672

Najih pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qamu 281741

Alqada pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Zahair Al Qadi 906616

Khalifah pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 637101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 863402

Traffic Police 896391

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 605808

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage 897467

Amman Municipality 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 110230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623111

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661181

Jordan Television 775111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 668101

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53290

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53290

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Husein Medical Centre, 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 642816

Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642442

Jabal Amman Maternity 642462

Mulabb, J. Amman 636140

Palatine, Shmeisani 667071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Mushar Hospital 667279

The Islamic, Abdali 66612757

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7771013

Al-Bahar, J. Ashrafiah 7751126

Army, Marka 8911115

Queen Alia Hospital 666100

Amal Hospital 607155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:

Zurqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zurqa National Hospital (09)986732

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (09)999991

IBRID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

Geck Catholic Hospital (02)27275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)27101

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (06)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel: (08)53290-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:05 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

07:30 Damascus (RJ)

09:25 Abu Dhabi (RJ)

10:05 Muscat, Dhahli (RJ)

10:05 Beirut (RJ)

10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

16:20 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

17:15 London, Frankfurt (RJ)

18:00 London, Frankfurt (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

11:15 Aden, Hudaidah (DY)

13:10 Frankfurt (VP)

14:20 Rome (AZ)

14:55 Munich, Aieppo (YP)

18:05 Beirut (RJ)

20:10 Amsterdam (KL)

23:40 Bucharest (RO)

06:55 London (KJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)

06:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

11:00 Madrid, Casablanca (RJ)

11:05 Montreal, Toronto (RJ)

11:10 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)

11:25 Geneva, Brussels (RJ)

12:00 London (RJ)

12:15 Cairo (RJ)

20:30 Damascus, Larnaca (RJ)

20:35 Jeddah (RJ)

22:05 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:00 Damascus, Paris (AF)

12:15 Hudaidah, Sanaa, Aden (DY)

15:20 Damascus (AZ)

15:45 Munich (YP)

19:15 Doha (RJ)

00:40 Amsterdam (KL)

01:25 Bucharest (RO)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights (Marka Airport)

07:00 Aqaba (RW)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in Jds per kg.

Apple 700/500

Banana 500/500

Banana (Mukammal) 480/400

Banana (imported) 500/700

Carrot 70/40

Cauliflower 170/100

Cucumbers (large) 120/100

Cucumbers (small) 200/150

Eggplant 100/600

Garlic 100/120

Grape Fruit 400/300

Lemon 400/300

Marrow (large) 120/80

Marrow (small) 180/100

Onion (dry) 220/160

Orange 400/300

Pear 850/700

Pear 400/300

Pepper (hot) 480/350

Pepper (sweet) 480/350

Potato 220/150

String Beans 700/500

Spinach 100/100

Tomato 150/120

Body of woman found dead in Sukhneh area identified

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Zaqra police Monday said they have identified the body of a woman found dead in the Sukhneh area of Zaqra on Feb. 8, and that they have arrested two suspects in connection with her murder.

The woman's burnt body was found dumped near the Jenin Highway. Her body was set aflame and was placed over a pile of stones. A huge tyre was placed over her body, police officials said.

Colonel Adnan Abdullah, director of the Zaqra Police Department, said that a woman from Jerash was reported missing by her family since Feb. 8.

The police official said that the body found burnt belonged to the missing woman, a 44-year-old nurse and mother of four. He said the victim's parents were able to make a positive identification of their daughter, when they recognized a silver crown on the victim's tooth.

Initial reports estimated that the murder

victim was between 16 and 18-years-old. Officials had said that an autopsy on the body revealed that the woman was pregnant.

According to Col. Abdullah, the suspects are brothers. He identified them as Mohammad A.M., 47, and Mahmoud, 30. Mohammad was said to be a sorcerer, and the victim was known to visit him frequently.

The police official said that on the day of the murder, the victim, wearing JD 2,000 worth of jewellery, visited Mohammad in Jerash.

He said the suspects robbed and killed the nurse at Mohammad's home, then placed her body in a box and drove to the Sukhneh area in Zaqra.

"The suspects set her body aflame in an attempt to conceal their crime," the official added.

According to Col. Abdullah, the suspects who were apprehended by authorities on Feb. 24, confessed to committing the crime.

Jordan, PNA agree to replace border crossing to facilitate trade exchange

By Cathy King
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Monday agreed tentatively to replace the present three shared border crossings to facilitate transportation of goods with the minimum security risk, a senior Palestinian official has said.

Visiting Minister of Planning Nabil Sha'ath yesterday told the Jordan Times that the two sides were "exploring the expansion of bridges for the transportation of goods between Jordan and Palestine."

The cost of expanding the border crossings is likely to be met by Germany and Japan, he said. Refurbishment would include state-of-the-art security, capable of dealing with cargo transportation.

Israel's stringent security

demands is currently hindering potential Jordan-Palestine trade exchange.

Feasibility studies once drawn up by the two parties will be then handed on to the donor nations.

Dr. Sha'ath and counterpart Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf independently confirmed that further talks were scheduled for two weeks' time.

"It was a general meeting addressing the proposed projects, which should be financed by donor countries, and general cooperation between the two ministries," said Ms. Khalaf.

"We also discussed the visit of a Palestinian mission within the next two weeks. Then other meetings will consider specific projects and will be held with donor countries," she added.

The Palestinian delegation is to consult with Jordan's ministry of planning officials, aiming to benefit

from its acquired expertise.

Also attending the meeting was Basem Awadallah, the prime minister's special advisor on the peace file, who said the main thrust of the talks rested on regional projects to be financed by Germany and referred to Dutch involvement and the fostering of cooperation of all receiving parties.

Earlier this month Dr. Awadallah told Quds Press that a tripartite meeting, including Israeli participation, was needed to overcome obstacles impeding Jordanian-Palestinian trade and to stimulate transport and trade activities.

The projects specific to the ministries of planning were among those raised at the Middle East and North Africa economic summit held here last October.

Ministry to establish institute to train workers at local councils

AMMAN (Petra) — In response to an initiative by HRH Princess Basma, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment will create a permanent institute to train workers and officials employed by local councils.

Speaking at a meeting attended by Princess Basma and members of local councils elected last year, Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs Abdul Razzak Tubailshat announced that work on the institute will start soon. He said the institute will benefit mayors, council members and other employees by enabling them to offer better services to their communities and thus upgrade performance.



Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Monday attends a meeting of the Jordanian National Committee for Women held in the presence of Minister of Justice Abdul Karim Dughmi (Petra photo)

Princess Basma expressed her delight at meeting with the women members of the local councils, stressing that she will continue the drive to ensure the women's success in helping to shoulder responsibilities in various social and economic fields.

The council members presented their views about their work and their needs to the Princess and the minister in an open discussion on councils' work.

Princess Basma also Monday attended a meeting

of the Jordanian National Committee for Women where she underlined the importance of this committee in helping to amend Jordanian legislation concerning women.

The Princess called for increased cooperation between the committee, the government departments and the Lower House

of Parliament, which, she said, can introduce amendments to law to benefit women.

Participants in the meeting, who included Minister

of Justice Abdul Karim Dughmi, reviewed a working paper summing up the general resolutions and recommendations of the World Conference on Women.

Union wins battle against dairy company; labour dispute settled

AMMAN (Petra) — The General Union of Food Industry Workers has won a wage and benefits battle with the Jordan Dairy Company.

According to the Ministry of Labour the dispute was settled following mediation by a reconciliation committee acting on behalf of the ministry.

A ministry statement an agreement signed by the two parties to the labour dispute requires that the company pay its workers annual increments of five per cent on the workers' basic salary provided that the raise is not less than JD 5.

The agreement also requires the company to increase all its employees' wages by JD 5 and to give these workers an additional cost of living allowance up to JD 40, the statement

said.

It said that the adjustments and raises will take effect retroactively from Jan. 1, 1996.

In addition, the statement said the company management will be required to deduct 10 per cent of the workers' wages and place the deduction in an employees' savings fund. It said that the agreement stipulated that the company will also offer its workers dairy products worth JD 5 every two months.

The agreement requires that the company reverse an earlier decision on the dismissal of company workers.

The statement said that the reconciliation committee was headed by Hussein Quraan, director of labour relations at the Ministry of Labour.

Association will not strike W.Bank lawyers — member

By Lila Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A member of the Jordan Bar Association (JBA) Council Monday denied a newspaper report claiming that the JBA has decided to strike all West Bank members from the association's roster.

Salih Armouti told the Jordan Times that the report published in Al Bilad Monday was baseless and that such an issue was never on the JBA Council agenda.

"We (the JBA Council) have not even discussed this possibility," said Mr. Armouti, adding that it is too early to take such a decision, "especially since West Bank lawyers have not yet established their own association."

According to the Al Bilad article, the JBA Council cancelled the membership of 111 JBA

lawyers residing in the West Bank.

JBA vice president Ziad Khasawneh also dismissed statements in the article claiming that he intends to travel to the Palestinian self-rule area to discuss with Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Minister of Justice Faraj Abu Medani the status of the Palestinian lawyers' membership in the JBA and the establishment of a PNA lawyers association.

Mr. Khasawneh said that most of the JBA West Bank lawyers paid up their membership fees last week in order to participate in the JBA presidential by-election in March. The president's seat became vacant with the appointment of Kamal Nasser as minister of social development.

He confirmed that West Bank lawyers make up 235 of the 3,000 registered

JBA members and that they would participate in the March by-elections. So far, nine lawyers have indicated their intention to run but have not yet announced their candidacy.

According to a JBA source who asked not to be identified, the strongest candidates for the seat are Walid Abdul Hadi, a former two-term president of the JBA and a nationalist, Hussein Mjeli, a former member of parliament and also a nationalist, and Salih Armouti, a member of the JBA Council and an Islamist.

Mr. Khasawneh added that when West Bank lawyers establish their own association, the JBA and the West Bank lawyers will reach an agreement which would "make everyone happy."

RJ today will get new Airbus-320 aircraft

AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national carrier, Monday announced that it will take delivery of a new Airbus-320 today which will raise its fleet to 19 aircraft.

The new plane will fly the medium and short routes to Middle Eastern, European and North African destinations currently being serviced by two other French-made Airbus Industrie in operation with RJ since 1990.

According to an RJ statement, the two-engine aircraft seats 144 passengers. RJ's other six wide-bodied Airbus 300s seat 185 passengers.

The statement said that RJ will soon retire of two Boeing-727 aircraft which have been in operation for more than a decade, thus shortening RJ's fleet age to nine years down from 11, the statement said.

It said that the airline is proceeding with its plan to modernise its fleet to ensure better air transport service at lower maintenance costs.

France to finance study on modernising Irbid, Jerash and Ajloun water networks

AMMAN (J.T.) — France is granting Jordan 5.5 million francs (about JD 786,500) to finance a study on modernising water networks in the Irbid, Jerash and Ajloun governorates, according to an agreement signed by the two sides in Amman Monday.

Ministry of Water and Irrigation Secretary General Qusay Qeisbat who signed the agreement with French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajole, said the study will take 18 months to complete and includes plans for modernising water networks, pumping stations, water towers and artesian wells in addition to an analytical study on the causes of and solutions to water leakage problems.

Mr. Bajole said France

had earlier provided a 30 million franc (about JD 4,269,000) grant to finance the Tabagat Fahl - Irbid water project.

He said this year France will provide a total of 100 million francs (14,230,000) to Jordan to help it finance its water projects.

Last month the ambassador told a regional seminar on water management that it will continue to provide financial and technical assistance to Jordan under protocols signed in 1994 and 1995.

Other French financed projects which are still being implemented include the execution of the Adasieh water project and the drawing of water from Deir Alla in the Jordan Valley to Amman.

WHAT'S GOING ON FILMS

- * "Le Verite" at the French Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.
- * "A Sleep With Anger" (to be followed by a telepress conference — a telephone link up between Jordan and the United States with director Charles Burnett) at the American Centre (3:00 p.m. — 5:30 p.m.).
- * Chilean film "Sandino" (in Spanish) at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman, at 7:00 p.m.

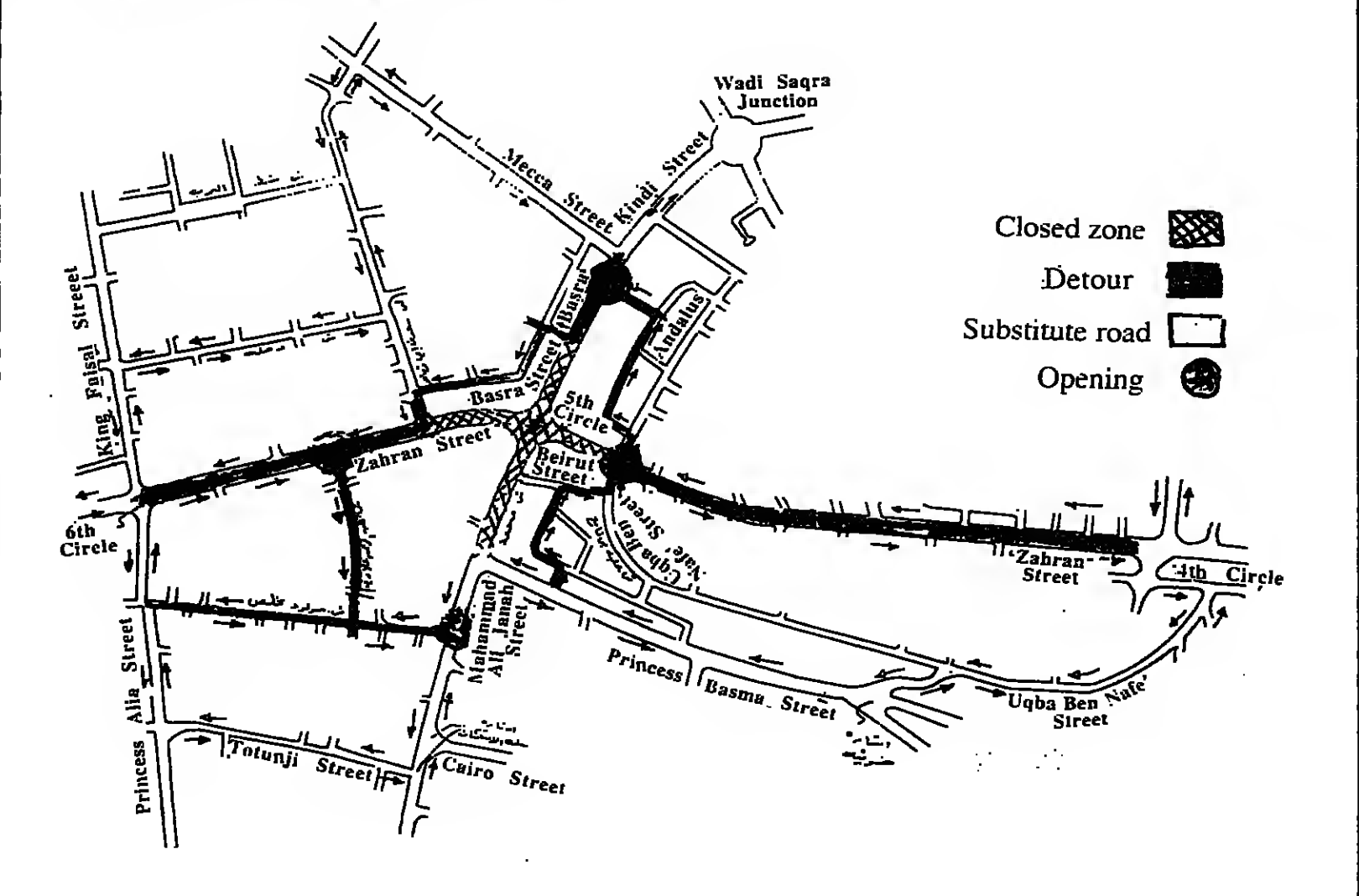
EXHIBITIONS

- * Engravings by French artists at the French Cultural Centre (until Feb. 29).
- * Abstract (plastic) art by Syrian artist Nazem Hamdan at the Royal Cultural Centre (until March 5).
- * Abstract (plastic) art by Syrian artist Nazem Hamdan at the Royal Cultural Centre (until March 5).
- * Abstract (plastic) art by Mirvat Emile Wahab at the Housing Bank Complex Gallery (until March 5).
- * Paintings by Jordanian and other Arab artists at Alia Art Gallery (until March 5).

Amman municipality announces closure of 5th Circle area

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Greater Amman Municipality has announced that it will close Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein Circle (formerly known as the Fifth Circle), one of the busiest junctions in Amman, as of Wednesday, due to a tunnel project in the area.

The municipality provided the following map of detours:



President: Taiwan prepared for Chinese intimidation

TAIPEI (AFP) — President Lee Teng-hui declared Monday that Taiwan was prepared to face any Chinese military intimidation and warned against panic as the local bourse dropped again and tensions with China mounted.

"Be confident: The government has counter measures," Mr. Lee told a campaign rally in Hsichih, outside Taipei, amid a flurry of press reports that spoke of potential confrontation on the Taiwan Strait.

"After the Communists started their military drills (last year), we drew up 18 response scenarios and they were prepared three or four months ago," Mr. Lee said.

"Some people here panicked when the Chinese Communists test-fired missiles. But there is nothing to worry about," the president told the rally, adding authorities here "would hand back in kind" whatever the mainland did to Taiwan.

Mr. Lee, whom Beijing suspects is steering the island towards formal independence, is running for a second term as the candidate of the ruling Kuomintang in the country's first direct presidential elections on March 23.

As he spoke Monday, the local bourse finished 1.3 per cent lower, dropping 61.77 points to 4,775.86 in the face of rising tensions.

"In view of heightening tension across the Taiwan Strait and an economic slowdown here, retail and institutional investors were doubtful of the effect of the government's market stabilisation fund," said Steven Ou of Jen Hsin Securities Co. Ltd.



Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui waves to some of 2,000 supporters at the ruling Nationalist Party's campaign rally in Taipei Monday. Taiwan is scheduled to hold its first ever direct presidential elections on March 23 (Reuters photo)

The government is raising a 200-billion-Taiwan-dollar fund (\$27.2 billion) as part of its efforts to boost the sensitive stock market, which often falls in response to reports on cross-strait tensions.

Those tensions have been increased in recent days by news reports saying China is planning some sort of attack on Taiwan's military outposts on small outlying

islands as part of its campaign of intimidation before the presidential elections.

In the latest reports Monday: — The China Times Express daily said more than 200 mainland Chinese fishing boats were massed around a Taiwanese defence outpost on Kinmen, a major Taiwanese island which faces the Chinese coastal city of Xiamen. Taiwan's

security authorities have said China could use civilian boats as a front to launching an attack on Taiwan.

— The United Evening News said the People's Liberation Army planned to attack Wuchai, a Taiwanese islet just 50 kilometres off the coast of Fujian province where Taiwanese troops are stationed. The newspaper quoted an unidentified media source in Hong Kong saying Taiwanese officials believed China planned to take Wuchai and had mobilised a large number of warships around the islet.

The Defence Ministry said it was checking the report and was monitoring Chinese troop movements but had no other information.

According to Defence Minister Chiang Chung-Ling, China is massing 150,000 troops in Fujian for a military drill in an attempt to sway voters away from independence candidates in the presidential election.

The Communists and Nationalists split after the 1949 civil war.

China has since considered Nationalist Taiwan to be a renegade province.

— The independent Hong Kong newspaper Sing Tao reported that grain prices had surged 10 per cent in Shanton, in the eastern part of Guangdong province which abuts Fujian, because of panic-buying triggered by fears of conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

The report contrasted with that in the pro-Beijing Ta Kung Pao daily, which said there had been military activities in Fujian province, but otherwise life there was normal.



An opposition activist wounded by police firing at Tongi rail junction near Dhaka is carried away by comrades Monday. Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina vowed tougher action to topple the government as a strike shut down the country for a third day and a U.S. congressman offered to act as mediator in the dispute. Nearly 50 others were wounded in sporadic violence across the country (Reuters photo)

2 killed, 50 hurt in Bangladesh violence

DHAKA (R) — Fierce battles between police and opposition activists left one man dead and nearly 50 people injured Monday as an opposition-led strike gripped Bangladesh for a third day, witnesses said.

In another shooting, opposition student leader Abdul Rashid was killed by rivals in the northern district of Sherpur, police said.

Life across Bangladesh was widely disrupted Monday as visiting U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson prepared for talks with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and opposition leader Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League.

Mr. Richardson, who has played peace-maker in Haiti, North Korea and Iraq, arrived in Dhaka Sunday.

"We have some views and I will convey them," he told the Bangladesh news agency (BSS).

Official sources said Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku had also offered his services. His previous effort to mediate in 1994 ended in failure.

The United States is Bangladesh's top aid donor. Ambassador David Merrill has tried several times to mediate between Mrs. Khaleda and Mrs. Hasina.

Witnesses said an unidentified man was shot dead by police at Tongi, a rail junction in the suburbs of Dhaka, when hundreds of activists tried to set an auto-signal system on fire.

At least 20 people were wounded, four seriously, reporters on the scene said. They said police fired nearly 100 shots to disperse bomb-throwing protesters.

All transport stopped except for rickshaws and a few buses. Trains, ferries and inter-city vehicles were idle and all but a few offices were closed.

"It looks as if we are living in a dead country," said an official in the port city of

Chittagong.

"It's more like the aftermath of a major disaster," another official in the southern city of Khulna told Reuters. "Practically nothing is moving. People are worried about what will happen next."

In Chittagong, nearly 20 people were injured, many by gunshots, as fighting broke out between activists and police trying to reopen the port, which has been shut since Saturday.

"The port area has virtually turned into a battle zone," one Chittagong journalist told Reuters.

Ten others were injured in sporadic clashes elsewhere in the country.

Monday's violence brought the toll to four dead and at least 200 injured since the start of the campaign Saturday.

Mrs. Hasina vowed tougher action to topple Mrs. Khaleda's government.

"I congratulate people from all walks of life for extending their support to make the non-cooperation movement successful," Mrs. Hasina said late Sunday, the second day of the opposition-led campaign.

"This will be followed up with tougher actions until Khaleda Zia is removed from office."

The "non-cooperation" campaign follows a victory in the parliamentary elections. The main parties boycotted the violence-marred poll. They allege the election was rigged and have vowed to force Mrs. Khaleda to hold another election within three months.

Mrs. Khaleda shows no sign of conceding.

Opposition leaders told Mr. Richardson at the U.S. embassy Sunday that Bangladesh would face more turmoil unless the result of this month's election was annulled and a fresh poll held within 90 days under a neutral caretaker administration.

Car bomb kills 4 at central Tirana

TIRANA (R) — Four people were killed and 14 injured Monday when a car bomb exploded outside a supermarket in central Tirana, police and hospital sources said.

They said a retired army officer and a supermarket employee were among the victims of the bomb, thought to contain 50 kilograms of TNT, outside the store owned by one of Albania's biggest concerns, Vefa Holdings.

Albanian President Sali Berisha immediately blamed the explosion on agents of the former Communist secret police Sigurimi, which was disbanded in 1990.

"This is a fascist act organised by the forces of the former secret police," Mr. Berisha told Albanian Radio.

However police said they were baffled by the attack, the first of its kind, and were seeking to establish whether the store was the intended target.

Witnesses said they heard three explosions which shattered the glass of nearby buildings. "I saw one storekeeper getting out with her dress burning and people streaming outside," one witness said.

The supermarket was closed immediately after the blast, which happened a few minutes after 9 a.m. (0800 GMT).

A police officer told Reuters he believed the explosion was caused by about 50 kilos of TNT placed inside a Fiat Regatta car with no number-plate.

"One small part of the engine and a tyre are all that is left of the car," the officer said, adding that several vehicles nearby had been damaged by the blast.

The manager of a hotel some 100 metres away from the explosion said it had sent car debris hurtling into his rooms.

Debris from the supermarket, which was blackened and charred in several places, lay scattered across the street.

President Berisha rushed to the scene with several members of his cabinet immediately after the explosion.

Albanian television showed Mr. Berisha, a heart surgeon, comforting a blood-soaked woman in hospital.

Vefa is one of the biggest trading and investment companies in Albania, with a turnover of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Albania, under Stalinist rule for four decades until it joined other East European countries in overthrowing communism, is expecting parliamentary elections by the end of May.

Starvation threatens thousands in China after snowstorms — aid agency

HONG KONG (AFP) — Tens of thousands in China's northwestern Qinghai province are at risk of starvation within the next 10 to 15 days after the worst snowstorms in 100 years hit the region, an international aid agency warned Monday.

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF — Doctors Without Borders) said in a statement that the situation is "extremely serious," in the remote prefecture of Yushu in Qinghai.

"We had read reports describing the problems but the team was quite shocked to see dead corpses everywhere when they got to the villages in Yushu. These people really have lost everything," said Alain Guilloux, MSF director in Hong Kong.

MSF said more than 80 per cent of the livestock has been killed by the snowstorms, adding that without urgent food and medical aid "these people will not survive."

According to the group, some 25,000 people have lost all their cattle, 55,000 have lost over 80 per cent of their livestock and more than 80,000 people were affected by the snowstorms.

The storms started in November with temperature plunging to -30 degrees Celsius (-22 Fahrenheit) in the mountainous regions inhabited mainly by ethnic minorities including Tibetans.

"Because our team has determined the situation is so severe we have decided to do it in this case to stave off an immediate disaster," Mr. Guilloux said.

The group has launched an urgent appeal for help in Hong Kong to purchase 1,200 tonnes of barley flour which will provide 60,000 people with 800 grammes a day for one month.

Chinese press reports from Qinghai earlier, this month said around 20,000 people there were suffering from severe frostbite and snow blindness following months of blizzards and Arctic temperatures.

As of mid-February, some 630,000 head of cattle had succumbed to the icy conditions in the province's Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, which is on the Tibetan Plateau at a height of 4,000 metres (13,000 feet).

Similar conditions in neighbouring Sichuan province have left some 50 people dead.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong's Disaster Relief Fund Advisory Committee approved Monday a grant of (\$252,223) to MSF as a contribution to its emergency relief operation for earthquake victims in Lijiang, in China's Yunnan province.

Japanese zoos lure young lovers

TOKYO (AFP) — Shunning expensive restaurants and trendy nightclubs, an increasing number of young Japanese couples are dating at zoos, according to a survey by a major zoological garden. Ueno Zoo, the main zoo in Tokyo, found young couples accounted for more than 30 per cent of its visitors for three days in mid-January, up from 10 per cent in 1988 when the Japanese economy was going through an unprecedented boom. The ratio of families decreased from 70 per cent to 50 per cent in the same period. Curator Osamu Ishida said the most popular spot for dating couples in the post-bubble economy era was the Monkey Mountain at Ueno Zoo. Mr. Ishida noted that families were actually outnumbered by couples visiting the zoo on Christmas Eve, a traditional day for hot dates among young Japanese. "Animals offer something that doesn't hurt anybody and they also soften people's feelings," he said.

Man unconscious after plane lands

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — An astonished man was taken unconscious to a hospital in the remote north-east province of Rattankiri when an airplane overshot the runway and rolled into town past his house, local officials said Monday. The unidentified man was apparently in shock after seeing the Russian-built Antonov airplane taxiing Sunday through a street at the end of the runway in the provincial capital of Banlung, 330 kilometres northeast of Phnom Penh, they said. "The plane ran off the runway and finished its journey in town, narrowly missing two large holes and one house," said a source familiar with the incident. "No-one was injured, but the owner of the house was taken unconscious to hospital." The plane, chartered from the Cambodian Air Force by the United Nations Development Programme, was transporting passengers and equipment to Banlung for a conference on conserving the rural province's resources and the cultural identity of the ethnic minority hill tribes who live there. Pok Sam El, director of Cambodia's Civil Aviation Authority, said Sunday the incident was "very minor" and that the plane was not damaged.

Major dubbed loser of week

HONG KONG (R) — British Prime Minister John Major has been dubbed "loser of the week" by a Hong Kong newspaper, a week before he is due to arrive in the British territory on a two-day visit. Mr. Major is "dogged by a combination of bad luck and poor long-term judgement," an unsigned column in the Sunday Morning Post said under the headline Loser of the Week. "As soon as he sidesteps one manhole, another opens up in front of him. Over the long term that typifies him as a loser." He was the first Western leader to visit Beijing after the June 1989 suppression of the pro-democracy movement in China.

Jacko goes chateau-hunting

LONDON (R) — American pop star Michael Jackson is hunting for a home in France and is eyeing a \$5 million fairy-tale castle that locals are already calling Chateau Jacko, the British Sunday Telegraph newspaper said. Replete with ramparts, eight turrets and a drawbridge, the Chateau de Carbone in the tiny village of Pont-Chretien near tours in west central France already has the security gates and searchlights that are de rigueur for today's superstars.

Sri Lanka opposition party leader slams war effort

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe Monday roundly criticised the government for its war effort against Tamil Tiger separatists and for letting security in the capital Colombo lapse.

But he refused to be drawn on the question on everyone's mind — whether his party will back the government's limited autonomy "peace package" for minority Tamils.

Mr. Wickremesinghe, prime minister until his United National Party (UNP) was swept from power in 1994, decried the Jan. 31 attack on the central bank which killed almost 100 people and destroyed the heart of Colombo's financial district.

He said the army and police intelligence system had broken down, there were not enough police on the streets and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) only had to be lucky once to score a major hit.

"We are just running out of luck," he told a Foreign Correspondents' Association lunch. "We are finding all problems coming to a head at the same time — political, peace talks, military and economic. This never happened earlier."

The armed forces took control of the rebel stronghold of Jaffna town in December, but Mr. Wickremesinghe criticised the government for concentrating on the north and neglecting the east and Colombo.

"The whole community centre, national centre, must be safeguarded," Mr. Wickremesinghe said, adding that the lessons learnt by his government, especially with the May 1993 assassination of President Ranasinghe Premadasa, had been lost on the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

Aung San Suu Kyi urges Japan to do more to promote Burmese democracy

TOKYO (AFP) — Burmese opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has called on the Japanese public to do more to promote democracy in her country, according to an interview published here Monday.

Recalling her stay in Kyoto a decade ago, Aung San Suu Kyi told the Asahi Shimbun that she felt that "many Japanese people cared about more than just business."

"But I think the consciousness of some Japanese people perhaps needs to be aroused a bit," she told the newspaper. "Perhaps those who care

about peace and justice are not speaking loudly enough."

Mrs. Suu Kyi urged Japanese "not to just sit and hope that peace will come" to Burma where she spent six years under house arrest until last year when the order was lifted by the ruling military junta.

"I think the Japanese people must study how peace is linked to justice, to human rights and to democracy, and to do what they can do to promote it."

"Since Japan is a country that has improved and developed and progressed very much under a democratic system, I feel certain

that the people of Japan would sympathise with our desire for democracy," she said.

"The desire of the people of Burma for democracy is based on the conviction that only if we have a system that guarantees basic human rights will we be able to make genuine progress," Mrs. Suu Kyi added.

"Japan, as the leading economic nation not just in Asia but in the world, has a duty to make people understand that economic growth is not everything but it is the development of the people, the happiness and fulfilment of the people, that is most important."

Indian government praises record as poll nears

New Delhi (R) — The Indian government gave a glowing account Monday of its performance over the past year but maintained a steady silence on the political corruption scandal that has claimed seven ministers since January.

In a State-of-the-Nation address to both houses of the Indian parliament, President Shankar Dayal Sharma played up the economic record of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's government and its development successes.

"The policies of the government have put the country on the path of growth enabling the people to realise their potential," he told the lawmakers gathered at the start of the final session of parliament before general elections due by mid-year.

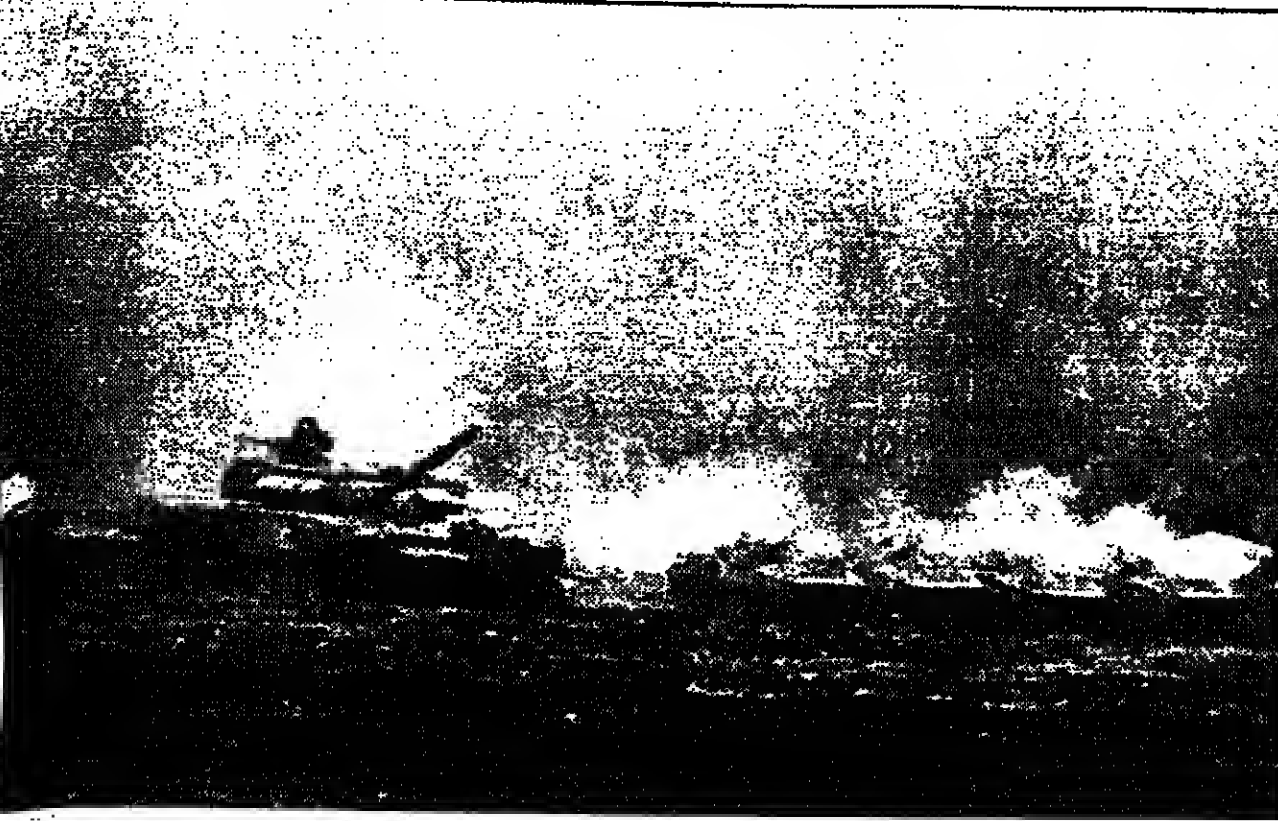
Mr. Sharma made passing reference to a mystery arms drop in eastern India last December, which had prompted opposition criticism of the government's failure to ensure effective policing of India's air corridors.

The incident, he said, "highlighted the need for constant vigilance."

But he made no mention of the \$18 million bribes-for-favours scandal which has dominated Indian political life since January, forcing the resignations of seven government ministers and a clutch of opposition leaders from the left and right.

The scandal is expected to dominate the two-week session of parliament which was called by the government.

The opposition Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has been hit hard by the corruption scandal, has said that it will demand Mr. Rao's resignation before allowing the passage of the vote on account.



Russian troops stay at their position in front of Ingush village of Arshy. Troops pounded areas near a northern Caucasus village outside Chechnya with artillery and mortar for a fourth day Sunday to flush out Chechen rebels they said were holed up there (Reuters photo)

Russian troops pullout from south Ingushetia region

SLEPTOVSK, Russia (R) — Russian troops pulled out of the southern region of Ingushetia Monday after local leaders accused them of spreading the war from neighbouring Chechnya.

This correspondent saw about 120 vehicles, including more than 50 light tanks and armoured personnel carriers, crossing the border into Chechnya after leaving positions around the Ingush mountain villages of Arshy and Galashki.

The vehicles were from Russia's 58th army, which had laid siege to the villages for the past five days.

Army General Gennady Troshchey said at the weekend that 14 of his men had been killed in an attack by Chechen rebels in the region. But villagers denied that the area was being used as a base by the Chechens.

Ingush President Ruslan Aushev called a meeting at the weekend of his region's

Security Council, which condemned the Russian troop presence as illegal and demanded its immediate withdrawal.

The troop withdrawal, monitored by Ingush Interior Ministry Police, followed an agreement at the council session, which was attended by Gen. Troshchey.

Villagers watching the pullout near Sleptovsk, a border settlement about 30 kilometres east of the Ingush capital Nazran, stood by the roadside in light snow as the vehicles rumbled by.

Their ultimate destination in Chechnya was unclear.

"Of course I'm glad to see them leave. How are we supposed to feel with so many soldiers and weapons on our territory?" said Medina, a 36-year-old woman in a coloured headscarf.

One of the Ingush police

officers lining the route said: "Yeltsin should send fewer guests to Ingushetia."

As the Russian troops started moving out, the sound of shells exploding could be heard in the distance from the direction of Chechnya, with which Ingushetia has close ethnic links.

Interfax said one Russian serviceman had been killed in the past 24 hours as federal forces came under fire 17 times in Chechnya. Russian troops have been battling separatist Chechen fighters for the past 14 months.

President Boris Yeltsin sent troops into the rebel region in December 1994 to crush a three-year independence bid led by Dzhokhar Dudayev. But rebels still control large areas of Chechnya.

The Russian troop presence in Ingushetia risked igniting a broader conflict,

which would do further damage to Mr. Yeltsin's chances in presidential elections on June 16.

Ingush officials said six civilians had been killed and 11 wounded in Russian shelling of villages since Thursday.

Thousands have been killed and many more made homeless in the Chechen conflict. More than 100,000 Chechens have found refuge in Ingushetia since Russia sent in troops.

The Kremlin has ruled out a withdrawal of troops from Chechnya, but Mr. Yeltsin has set up a special commission under Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to draw up a peace plan.

Details have not yet been made public. But the initiative is expected to give the Moscow-installed Chechen government a greater role in policing the region as the Russian troop presence is gradually scaled down.

U.N. considers condemning Cuba for plane shootings

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The United States, armed with maps and charts, asked the U.N. Security Council late Sunday to condemn Cuba for shooting down two U.S. civilian aircraft and to call for an international investigation.

No decision was taken on a draft U.S. statement obtained by Reuters and members were expected to meet again Monday. Washington did not ask for any sanctions at the closed-door emergency Council session it had called.

Council members, however, requested that U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, in her role as the current Council president, get the views of Cuba's Ambassador Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla. He is out of town but is expected to arrive in New York Monday.

According to Mrs. Albright, a Cuban MiG-29 aircraft destroyed the two small Cessna aircraft piloted by Cuban exiles Saturday by firing air-to-air missiles at them while they were over international waters.

Cuba has admitted to downing the aircraft but claims they were within its airspace.

Several Council members stressed their indignation at Cuba's action, explained to them by U.S. Central Intelligence Agency John Gannon.

"I was very heartened by the response from most members of the Council, that this kind of action was in fact an outrageous violation of international law ... which says it is unlawful to shoot down an unarmed, civilian aircraft in any place at all," Mrs. Albright told reporters.

The U.S.-drafted statement would have the Council condemn the shooting and say that "there is no justification for the Cuban government's unlawful use of force against civil aircraft in this tragic incident."

The United States also wants the Montreal-based International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), a U.N. agency, to investigate the incident.

Russia's Ambassador Sergei Lavrov was cautious in his response, and said he had to refer the issue to Moscow.

But China's Ambassador Qin Huasun said, "I think shooting down a civilian aircraft is condemnable. The shooting down of an unarmed civilian aircraft is wrong."

He reminded reporters of when the former Soviet Union shot down a Korean KAL airliner in 1983, and said the cold war prevented taking proper action at the time.

German Ambassador Tono Eitel said that "the shooting down of unarmed civilian aircraft is indeed a threat to the international order and a reaction is necessary."

Chinese Ambassador Wang Somavia read a statement of his government's position, saying that "China regrets the loss of human lives. From a humanitarian standpoint the decision to attack military, unarmed civilian aircraft is condemnable, whether this act occurred within or outside Cuban air space."

The U.S. Coast Guard, searching since Saturday for survivors, said it would continue its efforts until at least Monday.

The aircraft were piloted by members of Brothers to the Rescue, a Miami group of Cuban exiles that regularly fly in search of rafters fleeing the island.

A U.S. official in Washington said the two aircraft had been shot down roughly five and 16 nautical miles north of Cuban airspace. A third aircraft accompanying the other two did penetrate three nautical miles into Cuban airspace but returned to Florida unscathed.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher called Cuba's action "a blatant violation of international law and a violation of the norms of civilised behaviour."

White House spokesman Mike McCurry said President



Brothers to the Rescue pilot Bertto Lares points to the position of their planes when two of them were shot down by a Cuban MiG north of Havana. The founder of Brothers to the Rescue, Jose Basulto, who escaped unharmed, was flying closest to the red line representing Cuban territorial waters. Key West is located near the upper right portion of the map (Reuters photo)

Bill Clinton would get a detailed memorandum Sunday night on options to take against Cuba, but no decision was likely to be taken before Monday.

In Havana, Fidel Castro's government said it had shot down the aircraft and that the move should serve as a lesson to those who encouraged or undertook such actions.

A Foreign Ministry statement, quoted by the Cuban news agency Prensa Latina, said the two planes were shot down inside Cuban airspace between five and eight miles (eight and 13 km) north of Playa Baracoa, west of Havana.

A Cuban Foreign Ministry statement said three planes had penetrated Cuban airspace earlier Saturday but were bearded off by a Cuban Air Force fighter. The statement said the planes approached again, and one was warned of the risks they were facing.

In San Salvador, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, arriving here late Sunday, won immediate backing from El Salvador for any sanctions the United States might impose on Cuba for shooting down the two American aircraft.

"We've almost always supported the United States in sanctions against Cuba," Salvadoran Foreign Minister Ramon Gonzalez said when asked if the Central American country would back a tough U.S. response to Cuba's actions.

"We're very clear in the view that we have of Cuba and the obligation that it has to become democratic," he said.

Mr. Gonzalez spoke shortly after Mr. Christopher arrived at Comalapa airport on El Salvador's Pacific coast on the first leg of a five-nation tour of Latin America that has been overshadowed from the start by Cuba's shooting down of the two planes.

Mr. Christopher did not speak to reporters at the start of his three-day stay in El Salvador, but Mr. Gonzalez said the Cuba issue had inevitably been thrust onto the agenda here when Mr. Christopher meets several Central American presidents Monday.

Cuba is a country considered by many of Central America's conservative, pro-business leadership to be out of step in the march toward more democratic rule in Latin America.

Mr. Gonzalez declined to speculate whether the heads of Honduras, Costa Rica and Belize, who will join the mini-summit Monday, would also back the United States against Cuba, but his tone suggested El Salvador was firmly behind Washington.

"We regret that a country doesn't abide by international law, in this case it apparently shot down civilians," Mr. Gonzalez said.

American Theodore Hall fingered as spy who gave USSR A-bomb secrets

WASHINGTON (AFP) — American physicist Theodore Hall, currently 70 and living in Britain, gave secrets to the USSR that led to their first atomic bomb, according to a report Sunday.

Evidence indicates that Mr. Hall, a Harvard-trained scientist who worked on the Manhattan Project to develop the first U.S. A-bomb during World War II, was the spy the Soviets dubbed "Mlad," the Washington Post reported Sunday.

Mr. Hall was the object of a government investigation in the early 1950s, but no charges were brought against him.

According to the paper, a Soviet message that the U.S. intercepted in 1944 and decoded in 1961 revealed Mr. Hall by name.

While that message did not directly indi-

cate he supplied key atomic secrets, the paper said seven other KGB messages contain circumstantial evidence suggesting Mr. Hall was "Mlad."

Mr. Hall left the United States for Britain the following year. The Post said the United States and the Russians would neither confirm nor deny Mr. Hall's role. Mr. Hall also refused to confirm or deny any role in spying.

The Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb in 1949.

Experts believe the information accelerated the Soviet programme by two to three years.

Mr. Hall currently lives in Cambridge, England. He reportedly suffers from Parkinson's disease and inoperable cancer.

S. Korean ex-president denies graft charges

SEOUL (R) — Former South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan denied taking bribes on the opening day of his corruption trial Monday, saying a vast fortune he amassed in office came from political donations.

In the most eagerly awaited portion of his testimony, the former military general vowed to protect the identities of those who benefitted from his billion-dollar political slush fund after he left office.

"It would be better that the list is not disclosed," Mr. Chun told a three-judge panel at the Seoul District Criminal Court.

News that Mr. Chun scattered money among politicians and other influential figures has created a sensation in South Korea ahead of general elections in April.

Public attention was riveted on the trial to see whether Mr. Chun would give names.

Wearing a blue prison uniform emblazoned with prisoner number "3124", Mr. Chun stood in the dock along with five former aides, including his former chief bodyguard, finance and defence ministers and intelligence agency director.

Mr. Chun, the country's second head of state to be tried for graft in 10 weeks, was arrested in December and indicted last month on charges of taking 225.9 billion won (\$289.6 million) in bribes from businessmen during his 1980-88 term.

Prosecutors allege the money topped up a slush fund that reached 700 billion won, even more than the 500 billion won that Mr. Chun's successor Roh Tae-Woo has confessed to hoarding. Mr. Roh's trial began in December.

U.S. campaign enters decisive phase

PHOENIX (R) — The race for the Republican nomination for the U.S. presidency is entering a decisive three-week period that should determine whether Senate majority leader Bob Dole hangs on or right-wing TV commentator Pat Buchanan breaks through.

Up to now, the battle has been waged in three rather small states that are somewhat unrepresentative of the overall nation. Sen. Dole won in Iowa but not as decisively as expected. Mr. Buchanan delivered a crushing blow by winning in New Hampshire, and publisher Steve Forbes beat him both in Delaware.

But in the next three weeks, the race will spread across America with most of the biggest states weighing in. Campaigning will be less shaking hands and kissing babies and more a matter of organisation, money and television exposure.

It begins Tuesday when North Dakota, South Dakota and Arizona vote. Sen. Dole is favoured in the Dakotas, which are predominantly farming states similar to his native Kansas. But Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Forbes could spring a surprise in Arizona where the winner will gain 39 delegates to the Republican National Convention.

The presidential nomination will go to the candidate who captures at least 996 of the 1,990 delegates attending the convention in San Diego in August. On the Democratic side, President Bill Clinton is unopposed for renomination for a second term.

After Arizona, all eyes will turn to South Carolina, which holds its primary next Saturday.

The contest is shaping up as a decisive test. Sen. Dole has the support of the state's governor and Republican Party machine, but Mr. Buchanan expects to do well among Christian Evangelical voters, who form a substantial element of the party.

Former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, who came third in both Iowa

and New Hampshire, also needs to make an impression in South Carolina. Additionally, that night, Republicans in Wyoming will vote in party caucuses.

Three days after that, on March 5, comes the biggest night of the election season so far — the so-called "Yankee primary" — when five New England states are among eight holding elections.

A total of 208 delegates are up for grabs in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, Colorado, Georgia and Maryland. Sen. Dole and Mr. Alexander should do well in the politically moderate states of New England. Mr. Buchanan is looking to Georgia and Colorado.

Only two days later, the action switches to New York, with 93 delegates at stake. Sen. Dole and Mr. Forbes are the only candidates on the ballot in all districts. Mr. Buchanan is on the ballot in about a third of districts and his lawyers are fighting to have him included in more. Other candidates were deterred from trying to qualify by New York's arcane rules.

There will be no respite following New York, for only five days later, on March 12, comes "Super Tuesday" with 362 delegates on the line in seven mainly southern states: Texas, Florida, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Louisiana and Oregon.

If the issue is still not decided, the battle next moves to the midwest, where Ohio, Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin offer a total of 219 delegates on March 19. One week later, California, the biggest state of all, weighs in, teaming up with Nevada and Washington for 197 delegates.

Most commentators still believe the race will be over by that time. However, a few are saying this may be the first year since 1948 that the issue actually goes all the way to the convention before a nominee emerges.

Keating defends tough style ahead of polls

SYDNEY (R) — Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating Monday defended his tough political nature as he tried to woo voters and win a record sixth term in office for his ruling Labour Party in Saturday's national election.

"I am a passionate role model who believes in things," said Mr. Keating during a lunchtime television talk show after being asked to justify his vitriolic parliamentary behaviour.

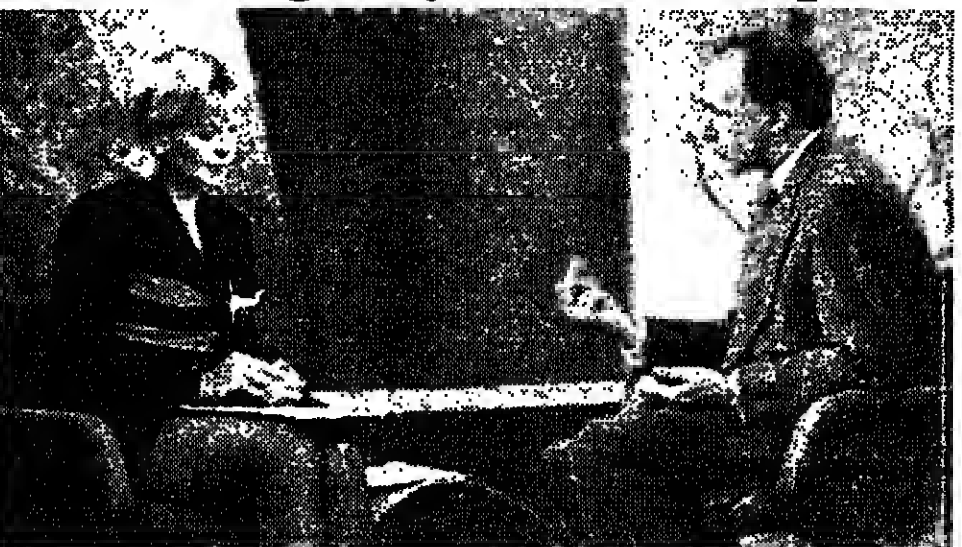
Two opinion polls published Monday showed Mr. Keating's Labour government continued to trail the Liberal-National party coalition by an average five or six percentage points.

Labour would lose the election on a swing of one per cent but some 15 per cent of the electorate are still undecided.

One of Australia's three leading opinion polls, the AGB-McNair poll published in the Sydney Morning Herald, found support steady for both the conservative opposition and Labour, at 53 per cent and 47 per cent respectively.

Another survey, the Amr-Quantum-Harris poll in the Australian Financial Review, found the opposition had extended its lead in the 12 most marginal electorates.

The poll found support for the opposition across the 12 electorates was steady on 48



Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating started the last week of his election campaign on Monday with an interview with Kerri-Anne Kennerley on lunchtime television in Sydney. Mr. Keating's Labour government is still trailing the conservative opposition Liberal-National coalition ahead of the March 2 poll (Reuters photo)

per cent while support for Labour dropped back to 43 per cent from 44 per cent.

Both Mr. Keating and opposition leader John Howard have said they would not stay on as leaders of their respective parties if they lose Saturday.

"I think we can win the election, but we were not 10, I mean I certainly wouldn't be leader of the Labour Party," said Mr. Keating, one of Australia's longest serving politicians who became prime minister in December 1991.

Opinion polls throughout the five-week campaign have revealed voters dislike Mr. Keating's tough politi-

cal style, which periodically erupts into vilification of his parliamentary opponents with labels such as "sleazebag and barfist".

Many voters equate Mr. Keating's tough parliamentary behaviour as a reflection of an arrogant government which has been in power for the past 13 years.

Even Labour's political advertising campaign conceded Mr. Keating's image was an electoral hurdle, with the first advertisement featuring people saying: "You don't have to like him, but you have to respect him".

Mr. Keating said Monday his tough parliamentary

behaviour showed he was prepared to fight the big issues such as health care and wage justice. He described parliament as "the clearing house of national pressure".

"I get party political personal. I don't get private personal. I am not some cardboard cutout...By an advertising agency," Mr. Keating said.

"What I have done is do the conscientious things that I think conscientious Australians want done," he said.

Conversely, opposition leader John Howard has been perceived by voters as weak and lacking leadership.

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Justice tops list

IT WAS the judiciary's turn to receive the attention of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti when he paid a working visit to the Court of Cassation and the Supreme Court of Justice yesterday. The visit reflects the new prime minister's interest in the third branch of government, an interest which we cannot but welcome and support, especially in view of what needs to be done to maintain its independence and integrity at this stage and for all times to come.

The truth, though, is that we have seen many previous prime ministers showing concern about the judicial branch but not much being done to lift the justice system as a whole to what it should be. The prime minister himself cannot be expected to be well-versed in how justice is rendered and administered in the country. Only learned jurists can comprehend fully the shortcomings and failings of any justice system in the world. Presumably, however, Mr. Kabariti was fully briefed on what needs to be done to elevate the country's judiciary to modern and satisfactory standards before he undertook his visit to the highest courts of the land. Better still, we would have hoped that a file on the subject was prepared for his examination containing important information about the status of the administration of justice in our country.

Obviously the white revolution that the new government has been mandated to carry out would remain shallow and meaningless if it did not address fully and adequately this particular question. The near completion of the new Palace of Justice building is certainly an important step in the right direction to ensure proper court decorum; but this impending achievement can never be enough to rectify the remaining basic problems.

Uppermost on the list of needed innovations is the establishment of a constitutional court to pass judgement on the constitutionality of certain legislations and practices. The prime minister may also wish to reflect with his legal aides on allowing the existing high courts to render rulings on constitutional issues as is the case in many developed countries.

Equally pressing is the selection and appointment mechanism of judges. In order to guarantee an independent judiciary, we must make sure that the executive branch has no indirect control over the appointment of judges by exerting direct or indirect influence over the Judicial Council through the selection of its members.

The fact that the judicial branch has caught the attention of the new government early on offers a new window of opportunity to redress these and other related issues in a bid to broaden the scope of change now being envisaged across the board. We have full faith in the determination of the prime minister and his team to deepen the meaning and impact of the badly needed change before it loses momentum and gets bogged down over daily politics.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily described the bombings in Israel as a gift in the lap of the opposition Likud Party and the extremist right that dealt a severe blow to the ruling Labour Party. Sultan Al Hattab said that while the assassination of the former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin benefited the peace process and backed the Labour Party, the Sunday bombings are bound to impede the peace process and the Israeli redeployment process in the West Bank, especially in Hebron. This is a lesson for Israel which should realise that bloodshed and violence can only beget violence, he said. While condemning the attacks on the Israelis, one can only point out that it was Israel's assassination of Ayash, its continued imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians, its continued occupation and seizure of Arab lands and its claim to the whole of Jerusalem with total disregard to Arab rights that motivated the attacks, continued the writer. He said the best way to break the cycle of violence is through speedy moves to achieve a just and comprehensive peace guaranteeing all parties' rights.

IT IS good that Syria and Iraq, the two sister and neighbouring Arab states have at last realised that they share a common interest: the waters of the Euphrates River which flows their territory, according to a writer in Al Ra'i. The regimes in Baghdad and Damascus have been estranged since 1979 due to rivalry between the ruling Baath parties in the two countries and the events that occurred in the Arab World since 1979 helped to further deepen the split between the two rivals, said Mahmoud Rimawi. The writer said that the two countries are in need of the river water which Turkey is now exploiting with disregard to its two Arab states' interest, and so they decided to convene a meeting of technical committees to discuss this question and examine measures that could be taken to deal with the situation. It is regrettable, said the writer, that Baghdad and Damascus have not agreed on any political moves that would bring them closer together despite the fact that the river water issue is a matter of life or death for the two countries.

The View from Fourth Circle

By Rami G. Khouri

Partisans, zealots and the cycle of degradation and terror

The two bomb attacks that killed and injured over 100 people in Israel Sunday are qualitatively and politically different from other terrorist attacks in recent years that have sought to derail the Palestinian-Israeli peace process; thus, they must be addressed in a different manner. These attacks are more serious than previous ones because they indicate that, a) Israeli, Palestinian, Arab and international pressure and killings of suspected Islamist militants have not wiped out the anti-peace camp's capacity to plant and explode bombs, b) the Hamas and other Islamists are not yet prepared to stop their attacks in the wake of the implementation of the Oslo B accord, and, c) such attacks can now have enormous negative consequences because of their capacity to swing Israeli public opinion away from Peres and towards the Likud and other rightist militants in the upcoming Israeli elections.

I totally agree with all those in Jordan, Israel, Palestine and the rest of the world who have condemned these attacks as senseless, savage and inhuman acts by opponents of peace. But I cannot help but ask the same question I asked the last time that such bombs exploded on Israeli buses, and the many times before that: What can be done to stop this terror campaign other than the clearly ineffective use of strong verbal condemnation and expressions of determination to pursue the peace process? This question becomes more urgent and more relevant now, because this bombing has taken place at a moment when the peace process is much more vulnerable than it was four, six or eight months ago. Previous bombings did not derail peace because both sides were determined to show that their approach could succeed. The measure of that success was the basic Oslo B components — Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian towns, and the Palestinian legislative and presidential elections.

The current combination of the Israeli elections and the imminent start of the final status talks between Palestinians and Israelis generates significant new vulnerability for Palestinian-Israeli peace. The process itself appears solid, in that the gains of the last three years are unlikely to be reversed. The danger, though, is not reversal, but a permanent stalling, a cold and incomplete peace in Palestine whose consequences will not be the same as the relatively benign consequences of anti-normalisation sentiments in Egypt and parts of Jordan. The larger reverberations of Sunday's bombings could be felt in months and years to come, if the peace process stalls and very few if any new gains are achieved. This could happen if Israeli government positions harden on the big issues of settlements, refugees, Jerusalem and borders, if Israeli public opinion hardens because of the terror attacks, and if Palestinian public opinion hardens or turns against Yasser Arafat because of the stalemate peace talks and lack of quality of life improvements for most Palestinians.

The deplorable and savage nature of the Sunday bombings is matched, unfortunately, by their predictability. If the peace process really hopes to achieve its full and lasting promise, all of us who support it will have to muster the capacity to deal with the phenomenon of terror bombings at a deeper level than has been the case to date.

This will require a combination of actions on different fronts: logistical precautions to make it more difficult for bombs to be planted, more effective intelligence and other actions to prevent attacks before they occur, and a much more convincing attempt to address the underlying emotional, historical and political sentiments that drive the bombers to their bombing.

We have to look more closely at where and how the Hamas resort to terror fits into the larger Arab-Israeli picture. Are the bombers a lunatic fringe of madmen whose impetus is far removed from civilised society, or are they merely the most desperate and violent manifestation of a streak of Palestinian and broader Arab indignity that runs deep in contemporary society? Is Hamas to Arab society what Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir are to Israeli society? Do such Muslim and Jewish killers emerge haphazardly from random populations mainly on the strength of their violence-prone genetic make-up? Or are they conceived, nurtured, armed and ultimately triggered into action by a more historical process whose volatile fuel is a continuously compounded sense of fear, indignity and vulnerability?

We have to make a serious effort to identify those very complex points of convergence between the fanatical and murderous ways of the Hamas bombers and the more routine concerns that many Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians and other Arabs have about the nature of the current peace-making efforts. Such an exercise is emotionally demanding and historically contentious; but if we do not accurately assess the root causes of Islamist terror (and its Zionist twin) we are probably doomed simply to keep suffering and condemning it for many years to come.

After the tragedy of death and the trauma of entire societies, the most troubling aspect of this terror is the dangerously close proximity of Hamas' political sentiments to the concerns of mainstream Palestinians and other Arabs about the peace process. The vast majority of these other Arabs would not plant bombs and kill civilians, but I suspect that most of them share significant concerns about the basic fairness and potential results of the current peace process. In the case of Egypt and Jordan, those countries' nationals who did not share their governments' enthusiasm for their respective peace accords with Israel could express their feelings by refusing to normalise relations with Israel. Palestinians do not have such an easy option.

An unsatisfactory peace, from a Palestinian perspective, translates into a permanently haunting past, and a perpetually frightening future. A stalemate peace process could mean long-term indignity, disenfranchisement, humiliation, vulnerability, and probable material degradation for millions of Palestinians — millions, not a few thousand here and there. (I personally find this prospect unlikely; I believe the peace process will inevitably achieve an acceptable outcome for Palestinians and Israelis, if all parties exercise the patience and decisiveness to keep moving in the direction of mutual fairness and reciprocal national rights. But this is probably a minority view. The majority of Palestinians, and I suspect also the majority of Jordanians and Egyptians, seriously

doubt the capacity or willingness of Israel to achieve a peace that is seen to be fair by the Palestinians.) The very process of making peace according to the Oslo accords is seen by many — perhaps even most — Palestinians to be intrinsically imbalanced in favour of Israel, and therefore chronically humiliating and degrading to Palestinians. The pragmatic, reasonable majority that feels this way mutters and sputters and gets on with day-to-day life; the small minority of disgruntled partisans and zealots quietly loads, aims and fires.

The new element of danger now is that the frustrations of the pragmatic majority may be aggravated by the realisation that the most tangible benefits of the Oslo peace process for most Palestinians will be merely episodic emotional highs every time some symbolic political act occurs — such as the initial Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, the Israeli redeployment of Oslo B, or the Palestinian elections. If these heavily metaphorical gains are neutralised by a stalemate in the final status talks, and the Palestinians appear likely to get little beyond Oslo B, then the doubters would have been proven right, and the romantic idealists would have been proven wrong. In such a worst case scenario, the pragmatic Palestinian majority will not just sit around and complain in letters to the editors.

The majority of Palestinians have supported or tacitly accepted Arafat's approach to peace mainly because they had no other option, and partly because they anticipated that the process would result in some justice for the Palestinians. Today, they are more convinced than ever of their lack of other options, and they are more concerned than ever that their expectation of justice is perhaps illusory. That sense of betrayal and despair will be aggravated by Israel's repeated closure of the occupied/autonomous territories, but such closure is understandable from the Israeli viewpoint where hundreds of Israelis are killed or injured by Palestinian bombers. What we have, in this situation, is very peculiar and precarious: the continuation of the core Palestinian-Zionist war, within the enveloping, outer protective shell of Arab-Israeli peace. Syrian-Lebanese-Israeli peace will make this situation even worse.

The situation is most wobbly. It calls for less emotionalism, deeper analysis, stronger action, and — most importantly, as has been the case since, oh, around 1916 — a heightened commitment to equity and mutual justice for Israelis and Palestinians as the only possible means of riddding that bedevilled land of the trauma and waste of terrorism. It is painful but important to remember that Hamas said it carried out these bombings in retaliation for previous killings of Palestinians by Israelis. If we are not prepared to come to grips with the hard cycle of emotions, rights, expectations and fears that drives people's actions in this holy, ancient and violent land, then we should stop being so shocked when every few months an Israeli or a Palestinian loads, aims and fires — slowly and repeatedly killing our capacity for comprehensive analysis, rational action and equitable peace-making, along with the innocent civilians.

Stop shadow boxing

By Dan Leon

WITH elections around the corner, the Likud is being forced, albeit reluctantly, to accommodate itself to the reality of the Oslo agreements, which, according to polls, now enjoy the support of some 60 per cent of Israelis. Even Ehud Olmert has stated that his party will start negotiating at the point where the present government leaves off.

At the same time, opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu is in the position of having to prove that his party's policy on final-status negotiations, regarding issues like autonomy, Palestinian statehood, and the settlements, differs fundamentally from the Labour-Meretz programme. Above all, the Likud must show that it is the only party that can be trusted to "save" Jerusalem both from Yasser Arafat and from Prime Minister Peres.

But does Jerusalem need "saving" from Shimon Peres? In recent statements, Peres' position was the "Jerusalem will not be on the negotiating table with the Palestinians at any time in the future. Jerusalem in the past was only the capital for the Jews, and it is first-class nonsense to create something like Berlin." And "Israel's agreement to the Oslo accords was intended to remove Jerusalem from any negotiations. [Other] compromises are necessary in order to avoid the need for compromises over Jerusalem."

Such talk is, of course, totally unacceptable to Palestinians, including 150,000 Jerusalemites for whom the city has been "united" by force since 1967. So whatever the nature of the informal, academic talks on Jerusalem

now being conducted with the Palestinians, it looks as if in its public stance on the future of the capital, the Labour Party is trying to out-Likud the Likud.

Jerusalem is, after all, part of a wider scene. If, as intellectuals from both sides have noted, the problem of Jerusalem stems from its symbolic role as "the fullest articulation of the emotions and prejudices people have toward the sum of issues comprising the entire conflict," a way must be found to defuse those issues one by one, so that the conflict as a whole can begin to assume a tractable shape. Jerusalem can then be approached like other issues which lend themselves to a rational solution.

Both sides are egotizing in a sort of shadowboxing. Israel continues to harass the Palestinians and confront the Europeans at Orient House; Palestinians register 10,000 properties of theirs in west Jerusalem. (According to Meron Benvenisti, about a quarter of the property in west Jerusalem at the end of the Mandate belonged to Palestinians, and about 60 per cent, if one includes land annexed to the Jewish sector of Jerusalem after 1948. However one views Jerusalem's future, Benvenisti correctly points out that such legacies of the past cannot be discounted.)

Oslo negotiator Yair Hirschfeld has written that negotiators must "check many, many possibilities of how to bridge gaps. It is important that you discuss matters in an easy atmosphere, where you can easily retreat from positions."

In the public eye, Peres appears deliberately to be doing the very opposite

over Jerusalem. Just as Begin gave up Sinai in order, as he thought, to save the West Bank, so Peres is prepared for compromise on other issues in order to save Jerusalem.

The West Bank was nevertheless lost. Israel, which has enjoyed a Jewish majority for the last 150 years, is not going to lose Jerusalem — but in the end it is going to have to find

ways and means of sharing sovereignty there with the Palestinians.

Comparisons with Berlin are irrelevant, but it is pertinent to point out that in the eyes of the world, Jerusalem is a unique city where exclusive Jewish control is untenable if it denies the legitimate rights of a third of its residents, who maintain their own religious as well as national

loyalties.

With all the complications involved, therefore, the most acceptable principled solution is going to be Jerusalem as the capital of two states.

Party politics have their own norms, particularly in election periods; yet to declare that there will be no negotiations over Jerusalem borders on the irresponsible. Elections come and go, but without a commitment to continuous political discourse with our neighbours, talk of a new Middle East has a hollow ring.

The author is co-managing editor of the Palestine-Israel Journal. This article is reprinted from the Jerusalem Post.

LETTERS

Inadmissible behaviour

To the Editor:

At a couple of social gatherings over the Eid, I found myself engaged in conversation with adoptive Jordanians on the nature of the postal services in the Kingdom.

By adoptive Jordanian I mean those who by marriage or love of the nation, or both, have decided to make Jordan our home and to spend our lives for the country's enhancement. We thus detached ourselves from our motherlands but there are many of us who use the postal service as our umbilical cord as we wish to maintain contact with those of our blood.

However, those working at the postal offices do not see us as dedicated Jordanians; we are seen as "rich foreigners ripe for the picking."

They do not realise that perhaps our letter or parcel is almost as valuable as the price of an airline ticket to us.

Why am I so bitter? I have first awoken to the fact that after feeling supportive of the postal services, the feeling is not reciprocated.

Since my arrival in Jordan thirteen years ago, I put up with the annual missing parcel, which, perhaps, I put down to chance. But look at this year's ratio from my relatives.

My children's gifts from their elderly grandparents with little or no income: a cardigan, a tie, a blanket, six holy advent calendars, a parcel of books, eight editions of children's comics, a birthday badge, twelve issues of "House and Garden," three boxes of charity cards, a cheque, a child's club membership, newspapers, an academic report, and these are items of which I have knowledge and documented evidence of despatch, went missing.

One company who despatches a professional magazine to me is so tired of my clearing last issues they ask me to contact my local post office as these have been despatched and they are sure the situation would be rectified.

Alas, they do not reside in Jordan.

Why should we, distance from our "other families", not

be permitted the joys of sharing our feasts because we came to live here? Who has the right to deny our relatives contact with their bloodline?

What type of security exists in our post office? I was happy last year when it was reported that a gang of postal workers had been intercepted. I hoped this was the end to this blatant theft.

Why do things still go wrong at the post office? Is it low pay, poor condition of service, morale or mere greed. Whatever it is, theft is always a sin. Working for a government body is an honour which should not be desecrated.

In my homeland the mail carries the symbol of the Royal Crown as protection. Sadly our postal official here, do not warrant the same honour.

So dear postal staff whoever you are, we are watching you. I suggest that all of us who have lost precious, sentimental items maintain a register. Question is who should we present it and who can we depend on to solve our problem?

My friends and I have established a pattern: favoured items, favoured season.

Let those who discredit the nation not persist in their positions.

The law of probability is stacked against these but those in responsible positions must act to stamp this cruelty out.

E.A.I. KHANAFSEH, AMMAN.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Fireworks brighten the skies of Nablus in first 'free' Eid

By Ghaila Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

IT WAS quite a different Eid Al Fitr this year in Nablus, the largest city in the West Bank.

There were fireworks in the sky; children rushed in droves to watch movies in cinema halls which had reopened for the first time in years; and adults partied every night of the Eid. At last, there was freedom after 28 long years of occupation.

"My children had never been to the movies and they had no idea what restaurants were like," said housewife Abeer Kana'an. After the Palestine National Authority (PNA) took over Nablus, children could finally enjoy their childhood the way they know best, she said. "Finally people could lead a normal life again."

Before and during the three days of the Eid, downtown Nablus was bustling with people buying traditional Eid sweets, apparently relieved there was not one Israeli soldier looking over their shoulders with a machine gun.

"At least we do not see Israeli soldiers randomly shooting in the streets," said Abdul Razaq Hijawi a 73-year-old owner of a boutique located in a busy shopping centre.

A 55-year-old woman voiced her satisfaction that "our sons will no longer be imprisoned by the Israelis. We can sleep without fear that soldiers will take our young men away."

"The situation in Nablus is much better now. At least no one fell martyr on the Eid and we were able to visit the dead without any problems," said Raneen, a 24-year-old hairdresser, referring to the barrenment Palestinians used to encounter when visiting



Aerial view of downtown Nablus (file photo)

cemeteries on the first day of the Eid, which is a long-held tradition in Palestine as in Jordan.

Raneen said that Palestinians could now work without Israeli interfering or imposing curfews on them.

But despite enjoying their newly found social and

political freedoms, Nabulsi were not very happy with the economic situation in their city which, they said, has suffered from a recession after the Israelis sealed off all roads leading to it.

Nablus Governor Mahmoud Alul, told the Jordan Times in an

interview that the city had witnessed a rapid progress in terms of security and stability. But he said that the economy, which is organically connected to the political situation, effectively affects businesses, he added. He said people

should be patient as change will eventually take place.

Many businesses in Nablus used to rely on customers from other areas of the West Bank as they would come for the less expensive commodities in the city. "It is true we are free

and secure. But we cannot be that happy. There will not be fundamental change as long as Israeli soldiers still stand guard at the doors of Nablus," said the owner of a supermarket.

In fact some businessmen believed that Israel's closure of the

city was meant to effectively cripple the economy even though it was done under the pretext of wanting to provide security.

"My business slowed down after the city's closure as I was relying on the Jerusalem market," a 40-year-old owner of

a boutique said.

Pointing to the investment climate in the city, Mr. Alul said that investors are setting up their businesses in Israel and not Nablus because Israel has a higher return on investment.

Thus, he added, the economic growth in

Nablus will witness a slow-down for some time.

Some Palestinians seem not to have been able to comply with the laws the PNA is imposing after having fought for nine years of the uprising, Mr. Alul said.

"Throughout the years of the uprising, young men considered themselves freedom fighters and consequently our guardians. But now we have to gradually help them get used to the new system by providing them with youth activities such as youth and scouts clubs," he added.

A taxi driver said that the PNA should understand that it would take some time for people to get used to the new situation, as they lived under the occupation for so many years and could not easily adjust to the new system.

"We need time to adapt to the new rules imposed by the Palestinian authority," he said.

While talking about the Palestinians' failure to accept a new authority, Mr. Alul said some people who work for the authority are incompetent themselves and need more training to be able to deal with people efficiently.

"We are planning to start on the on-the-job-training programmes for these people," he said.

If the uprising "brought us the long-awaited freedom, it is also responsible for the fact that most young people were left with little education and no social life. Now we try to redress the situation and teach different values to our youth," he said.

In general, he added, the situation in Nablus is good and the problems which sometimes occur are those encountered by any country passing through a period of transition.

Kuwait still traumatised by Iraqi occupation

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait, traumatised by the Iraqi occupation which ended five years ago, is still anxious about President Saddam Hussein's ambitions and is trying to check growing violence from its own people.

Kuwait's information minister, who was visiting Washington to pave the way for a visit by the Emir on Feb. 28, expressed Kuwaiti concerns about Saddam Hussein's remaining in power.

"The dictator must go because his regime is still a threat to the region," Sheikh Saud Nasser Al Sabah said, adding President Saddam had to be removed so that Iraq respected human rights and its neighbours' borders.

Such trauma manifests itself daily with a rising tide of violence which alarms officials and sociologists.

Young girls have been raped, people murdered with machine guns and businesses held up by armed robbers in a wave of violence that police General Abdul Majid Khorat blamed on "the trauma provoked by the Iraqi invasion."

The speaker of parliament Ahmad Al Saadoun said "the wave of violence is indeed increasing," although he added: "The invasion alone does not explain the spread of this phenomenon."

According to figures published in the media, 5,500 crimes and offences, most of them described as "very violent," were committed in the first six months of 1995 in Kuwait, a country of 1.9 million inhabitants.

Firearms were used in 18 per cent of the cases.

Amid a wave of hold-ups at gasoline stations, a deputy has proposed to parliament

the sale of gas coupons at supermarkets to lessen the risk of consumers being robbed.

Large quantities of weapons have remained in the hands of Kuwaitis since the Iraqi occupation — which lasted from the Aug. 2, 1990 invasion to liberation by U.S.-led forces on Feb. 28, 1991.

In April last year, Kuwait also introduced the death penalty for drug traffickers.

In a new manifestation of their concerns about their future, many Kuwaitis are seeking to buy homes abroad, or leave the country at the slightest movement of troops in Iraq.

"The behaviour of Kuwaitis still shows some hesitancy to free themselves from the memory of the occupation, as if this page in history could return at any moment," an Arab diplomat here said.

But the authorities have been unable to ensure their own security and have since the end of the Gulf war in 1991 signed defence agreements with the United States, Britain, France and Russia.

Worry still permeates the community of 120,000 be-doun — Arabs without nationality.

The authorities have pledged to determine their status over the next year, with some of them being naturalised as citizens and others punished for collaborating during the occupation, although nothing specific has been announced.

The authorities have said repeatedly that the status of the be-doun will be determined based on their "loyalty."

Killing revives doubts

(Continued from page 1)
"The AOHR believes that the murder of Hussein Kamel and other members of his family is an unlawful execution for which the Iraqi authorities must take responsibility," it said in a statement.

Whether the incident was premeditated, whether it was carried out by members of Hussein Kamel's family, or organised with certain members of the Iraqi security

forces, the Iraqi authorities are responsible for ensuring the security of their citizens and guaranteeing justice to those who have acted against the law," it added.

The organisation also denounced Iraq's decision to honour the two assailants said to have died in battle with the Kamel by giving them state funerals which it said gave appeared to legalise their crime.

IAF shifts its position

(Continued from page 1)

that he would make in the policy statement in Parliament.

Another area of key concern of the IAF is what it sees as government discrimination against known IAF members in official appointments.

"Until now, Islamists, particularly IAF members, are (banned) from preaching in mosques," said Dr. Saad.

"We feel there is a veto on all sensitive posts for the Islamists," said Mr. Mansour.

"There isn't one single secretary general of a ministry — not even a director — who is an Islamist. Are the Islamists considered as alien? Do they come from another planet?"

The policy statement should stress that "all citizens will be treated on equal footing and on the basis of strength and honesty," Mr. Mansour said.

The IAF deputies also referred to the bans that were imposed against some political meetings in public in the last two years, particularly against a gathering that was supposed to have launched a national campaign against the normalisation of Jordan's relations with Israel.

They demanded that such bans be lifted and more freedom be given to political parties to organise public meetings.

Bassam Emoush, an IAF deputy from Zarqa, wrote in

the Arabic-language Al Rai daily that he expected a better relationship between the Islamists and the government "if the government showed it was placing confidence in the Islamists" and appointed Islamists to senior government positions.

Some IAF deputies have openly voiced dissatisfaction with the front leadership's decision not to join the Kahariti government. However, the dissatisfaction has not turned into splits within the party.

The government is seen assured of a vote of confidence even without IAF support. If the front votes in favour of the government then it will be the first time it

does so since the Arab-Israeli peace process started in September 1991.

"The IAF would like the government policy statement to be based on Islamic principles that go in line with Islamic Sharia as it had been the case of the Mudar Badran government" in early 1991, said Dr. Saad.

"We do not expect Islamic Sharia to be applied to the letter, but we want assurances that the country is moving in that direction."

"We are not hypocrites. We are not rigid in giving the vote of confidence," said Dr. Saad. "I think we should give the government a chance. If there is a real change, let them have (the IAF's vote of confidence)."

Politics different from trade

(Continued from page 1)

its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Under an exemption from the sanctions Jordan receives about 75,000 barrels of crude and fuel oil from Iraq every day and it settles part of the oil bill in food and medicine exports.

The Kingdom, citing mounting Iraqi debts, has reduced envisaged exports to Iraq by half to \$220 million in fiscal 1996, but the Kingdom continues to receive the same amount of Iraqi crude and fuel oil.

Jordanian officials have repeatedly affirmed that the reduction in exports to Iraq under the annual protocol

was warranted by pure economic reasons and has no bearing on Jordanian-Iraqi political relations.

Diplomatic sources and political observers do not expect Iraq to cut off its oil supply to Jordan if only because of Baghdad's need to maintain open borders with the Kingdom, which represents its main lifeline to the outside world.

However, Baghdad, whose oil exports are banned under international sanctions, could decide to "see things in a different light if Iraqi oil starts to flow out" under an expected deal with the United Nations, said a diplomat.

The diplomat was referring

to Iraqi-U.N. negotiations on Iraqi oil exports worth \$1 billion every three months to pay for Iraq's needs of food and medicine. There are strong signs that the Iraqi government would accept the deal, "although Baghdad's behaviour is not very predictable," noted the diplomat.

If and when it accepts the deal, Iraq could receive up to \$700 million to \$750 million worth of food and medicine under U.N. supervision every three months. In that scenario, analysts say, there is an offchance Iraq might decide to "punish" Jordan for its criticism of the Iraqi government by cutting off the oil flow to the Kingdom.

Mr. Kahariti appeared to be alluding to that possibility when he instructed the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources after assuming office two weeks ago that Jordan should have oil reserves to last at least two months at all times.

However, a possible scenario involves the incorporation of the Iraqi oil exports to Jordan as part of the U.N. deal, according to diplomatic sources.

The sources say that the United States, the key player in the U.N. and an ardent advocate of continued sanctions against Iraq, favours including the Iraqi oil exports to Jordan as part of the limited sales envisaged under Security Council Resolution 986.

Arab-American killed

(Continued from page 1)

peace process, we will continue with it," he said.

"At the same time, we will take all appropriate means to strike at terrorists everywhere, both before and after they commit their criminal actions," he said.

The prime minister in particular said that the total closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip ordered after Sunday's bombings "will continue as long as is required from a security standpoint."

In defence of the government, Internal Security Minister Moshe Shahal told Israel Radio: "No one has proved that a closure would have prevented the attacks."

While families buried their

dead, Israelis returned to the site of the bus bombing near Jerusalem's central bus station. They lit memorial candles and recited prayers.

Banners were plastered across a nearby fence with one reading: "They say there is peace but there is no peace."

The Yediot Ahronoth newspaper published individual photos of the dead Israelis across its front page under a red-and-white headline that screamed: "The heart breaks."

Throughout Israel, schools began the day with a moment of silence for the bombing victims. Jerusalem's Mount Herzl cemetery, where Prime

Minister Yitzhak Rabin was buried after his assassination by a right-wing Jew less than three months ago, again became the focus of national attention for the funerals of many of the bombing dead.

Nine of the Israelis killed on Sunday were young conscripts returning to base after weekend leave, the army said. Two of the dead in the Jerusalem blast were Americans.

PNA police have arrested 37 Hamas members since Sunday's bombings, Palestinian officials said.

"From midday yesterday until midday today we have arrested 37 members of Hamas," said a Palestinian security officer on condition he not be identified. Palestinian Attorney General Khaled Al Khudra

confirmed that an unspecified number of Hamas activists had been arrested and vowed to pursue the action.

"The arrests will reach anyone who harms the security or the economy or the interests of the Palestinian people," Mr. Khudra told AFP.

But he denied that there was a link between the arrests and "any incident" which may have occurred.

Syria said ahead of fresh peace talks with Israel that the latest bombings showed a comprehensive regional peace was needed.

"The explosions in Israel underline the big need for a just and comprehensive solution to all aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict," the official daily newspaper Tishreen said.

Hamas may halt attacks

(Continued from page 12)

not want to be suicidal themselves," Abu Amr said.

Whether or not the Hamas overture is picked up by Israel, the movement will lessen its attacks on Israeli targets, Abu Amr says.

"If Israel releases prisoners and even if they don't you will see a slow pace of violence against Israelis in the future, unless Israel provokes Hamas by assassinating its leader or acting against holy

places," he said.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's response to news of the two blasts was unequivocal. "These are not military operations, they are terrorist operations," he told reporters at his office in Gaza City.

"I condemn it completely and I condemn any power behind this — it is not only against civilians, it is against the whole peace process," he said.



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Cocktail Nite
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Cocktail Nite
any cocktail for 2JD.
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Every Day HAPPY HOUR!
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Buy any drink, get another one free.



Abdoun Circle

Palestinians decry Israeli closure of territories

GAZA (R) — Palestinian officials criticised Israel Monday for frequent closures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the past two years, saying they perpetuate difficult economic conditions that threaten support for peace.

Israel stopped goods and people from entering the self-ruled Gaza Strip Monday in a clampdown on Palestinian territories after two bomb attacks inside the Jewish state a day earlier.

The bombings, in occupied Jerusalem and Ashkelon, killed 25 people and the two suicide bombers from the militant Hamas movement.

They were carried out only two days after Israel had lifted a 10-day closure of the territories.

"Hungry people react violently, and what does Israel think would be the reaction of workers who go hungry? closures will only increase frustration which builds up violence," said top PLO negotiator Ahmad Korei.

"We are afraid that closures are no longer a reaction to attacks, but have become an Israeli policy," Mr. Korei said. "The already-destroyed

and vulnerable Palestinian economy can't tolerate any more destructive blows."

After Sunday's two bombings some Israelis criticised Prime Minister Shimon Peres for having ended the earlier closure.

But Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials warned Israel that hunger and poverty was reducing popular support for the peace process.

Closure of the West Bank and Gaza in the two years since responsibility for them was handed to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and his Palestinian Authority has affected all parts of the Palestinian economy, officials said.

They complained that economic conditions — particularly in poverty-stricken, overcrowded Gaza — have never been worse.

Palestinian economists estimate that the average Gazan worker feeds up to 10 people, and labour union official Mohammed Al Modawh said: "Closures prevent more than 20,000 Palestinian workers from reaching their jobs in Israel, which means these people

lose around \$1 million daily.

"Our daily economic losses resulting from the closure are \$6 million," added Mohammad Al Qudwa, head of the Gaza Chamber of Commerce.

To reduce the impact of closures, the PLO is building a port and an airport in Gaza. Both are expected to be operating next year but Israel would still control the flow of goods.

The Palestinian Authority condemned Sunday's bombings and stressed that such attacks harmed Palestinian economic, political and social interests.

Support for suicide attacks against Israelis waned when people felt their interests were directly harmed. But economic development and prosperity, gains of peace with Israel, have so far been illusions for most in the territories.

"We have seen nothing of these promises of a good life and economic prosperity. All we have experienced is closure, isolation, and economic deterioration," said a worker who has been banned entry to Israel for work.

Iraqi dinar unstable despite oil talks with U.N.

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq's currency, battered by crippling U.N. trade sanctions, is showing no sign of stability despite government measures to tighten money supply and the country's talks with the U.N. on partial oil sales.

"The dinar is now so volatile that you can have three drastically different rates in one day," said a Baghdad trader Monday.

In mid-January the dollar was worth about 3,000 dinars. It slumped to about 450 in less than a week when Iraq and U.N. decided to discuss the possibility of allowing Baghdad partial oil sales worth \$2 billion in six months.

Baghdad traders said since then the dinar has oscillated between 500 and 1,200 to the dollar. "It (the dinar) could open at 600 to the dollar, plummet to more than 1,000 in the afternoon and soar to 500 in the evening," said another trader.

The ups-and-downs in the dinar's value have forced many Baghdad traders to shun business. "The current climate is not so healthy for trade. You are almost a loser if a buyer or seller. So you

would be better waiting," said another trader.

The rise in the value of the dinar since January has prompted many Iraqis to cling to the local currency more than at any time since U.N. trade sanctions were imposed for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iraq's central bank is waging a war against what it describes as "the mass of paper money" in circulation. It has liberalised the exchange rate and is said to have stopped the printing of new paper money.

Its governor, Isam Hweish, urged Iraqis Monday to keep their dinars and said the government economic measures were bound to fix a stable exchange rate for it in the near future.

In remarks published in the ruling Baath Party newspaper Al Thawra, Mr. Hweish said the value of the dinar would "inevitably rise after any agreement with U.N." on oil sales.

In comments to state-run media, Iraqi officials predict that an agreement with the U.N. to allow Iraq oil sales worth \$2 billion in six months for humanitarian goods will

have to be signed sooner or later.

Iraq's chief negotiator at the oil talks, Abdul Amir Al Anbari, is in Baghdad to brief Iraqi leaders on the outcome of his New York discussions, wrapped up without an agreement last week.

The central bank's official rate is 450 against the U.S. dollar but the greenback was exchanging hands at 750 on the spot market Monday.

Trade Minister Mobammad Mebdi Saleh has opened his ministry's warehouses flooding state-owned supermarkets with foodstuffs and essential goods in a bid to keep prices down.

He assured Iraqis Monday that his ministry's stores were still brimming with commodities and current sales would not affect government rations providing about 50 per cent of essential foods to every citizen at giveaway prices.

On Monday, state supermarkets offered huge quantities of food supplies including sugar, tea, rice and vegetable oils plus electrical and construction materials at prices lower than those on the open market.

France must cut spending more to contain deficit

PARIS (AFP) — Spending cuts and tax increases reduced the French budget deficit to within a whisker of the target last year, but the knife will have to go a lot deeper in the next two years if France is to meet the Maastricht timetable, official figures showed Monday.

And a central unknown factor remains the outcome of spending on welfare — which the government is trying, apparently with great difficulty, to contain.

Budget Minister Alain Lamassoure said after a cabinet meeting that the budget deficit last year hit 323 billion francs (\$64.6 billion).

The government had set a target of 321.6 billion francs under its programme to reduce the overall public deficit from six per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1994 to 3.0 per cent by the end of 1997 in order to qualify as a founder of a single European currency on Jan. 1, 1999.

Economy Minister Jean Arthuis said that the final figure for the overall public deficit, comprising the budget deficit and deficits by the social security system and local authorities, would be "around" the range of five per cent of GDP planned by the government.

But the outcome would depend on final figures for welfare spending and he was "prudent" about this.

The government launched fundamental reform of the welfare system last year to try to contain costs and introduce structural change.

This provoked strikes in the transport sector over separate matters such as special pensions arrangements, and in recent weeks reports here have suggested that welfare spending this year is already showing signs of breaching targets.

Mr. Lamassoure said that budget expenditure had risen by two per cent last year from the figure for 1994, which was the same amount as the increase in retail prices.

This was "the smallest increase in real terms for five years" and had been achieved by means of "economies of 43 billion francs by cancellation of credits."

He said that an effort "of at least the same amount" would be needed this year and next if the public deficit were to be reduced to 3.0 per cent of GDP. This should be achieved because France was committed to participation in the Euro currency and because once the debt ratio fell below 3.0 per cent of GDP, the total debt began to fall.

Meanwhile, official figures published Monday showed that consumer prices had risen by 2.0 per cent in the 12 months to January and that household spending on manufactured products had surged by 5.1 per cent, after a decline of 0.8 per cent in December.

Mr. Arthuis said that strikes at the end of last year had reduced tax revenue by 13 billion francs.

The government had compensated for this by cancelling credits of five billion francs and ministries had not spent a further sum of eight billion francs. He hoped that the economy would show new growth from the second quarter of the year.

In 1994, the public deficit amounted to 6.0 per cent of GDP and the government has had to make several cuts and adjustments to come within range of its target for 1995.

Many taxes have been, or are to be, increased, and already the government expects to have to curtail expenditure this year to remain on target to qualify for use of a single currency.

EU seeks to recruit Asia as ally for new world trade rules

BRUSSELS (AFP) — This week's landmark EU-Asia summit in Bangkok will seal an informal alliance between Europe and the world's fastest growing economies in favour of a new round of world trade liberalisation, officials said.

Although the primary focus of the two-day summit will be boosting the amount of business done bilaterally between Europe and Asia, European Union (EU) leaders are also determined to use the opportunity to thrash out a common agenda for establishing a new wave of multilateral rules under the auspices of the newly created World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The first ministerial-level conference of the WTO will take place in Singapore in December.

The EU wants the event to be the launching pad for a new round of negotiations aimed at establishing worldwide rules governing the relationship between trade and investment, competition, the environment and labour standards.

By getting Singapore to agree on an ambitious agenda for a new round of liberalisa-

tion, Brussels believes it will significantly enhance the authority of the fledgling WTO, thus helping to curb what it regards as a dangerous tendency in the U.S. towards taking unilateral action.

The Asian countries are seen as playing a pivotal role in ensuring that this happens. "If we can get Japan, Korea and the ASEAN countries moving on the same lines as us, that creates a very powerful bloc that will be difficult to resist," commented an aide to EU Trade Commissioner Leon Brittan.

Officials in Brussels are optimistic that they will be able to achieve their objec-

tive of a strategic alliance, pointing to last year's multilateral accord on the liberalisation of financial services as evidence of a growing convergence of views.

The accord was concluded under EU leadership with the support of the major Asian economies proving decisive after the United States pulled out of talks.

They also highlight the fact that the Asian participants have agreed to follow up the summit rhetoric with detailed discussions.

A meeting of senior officials from both sides is to meet before the summer with a broad mandate to examine

ways of boosting trade and investment between the EU and Asia. Its brief will however be initially to focus on establishing a common agenda for Singapore.

Nevertheless, EU and Asian views on trade are still far from being completely convergent and there have been signs recently of the EU growing increasingly frustrated with Japan's unwillingness to simplify the huge array of bureaucratic obsta-

cles that Western companies face in trying to penetrate its markets.

More broadly, the priority given by the EU to establishing WTO rules on investment in part reflects the difficulties that European companies have experienced in practice dealing with administrations in the Far East.

"Asian governments must permeate their administration with attitudes which encourage investment," Sir

Brittan said recently, highlighting a widespread lack of transparency as a major obstacle to Europeans investing in the region.

EU calls for the opening of a dialogue on the relationship between trade and labour standards in the WTO have also raised eyebrows in Asia, where such moves are often suspected of being motivated by protectionism rather than genuine concern about forced or child labour.

But the outcome would depend on final figures for welfare spending and he was "prudent" about this.

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Prescriptions

"Do you have a flu medicine that will put the germs to sleep but keep me awake?"

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
by Heri Arnold and Mike Arghitt

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

BELAF
GEWIH
ZANATS
BUSUDE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: A

Saturday's Jumbles: CHIDE VOUCH FUSION RELISH
Answer: A mortgage can be this but not that — ON THE HOUSE

HOROSCOPE
FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your mind is working cleverly today and you know what should be done to become more successful in your undertakings.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Try to gain whatever data you need confidentially today and then later tonight use it wisely to gain your finest aims for your success.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Plan early today how to gain your greatest ambitions and then go after them in a positive way. A compliment works wonders.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Do as much public activities this morning as you can and gain added prestige, success and profit later this evening as well.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21). This is a good day today to take those chances you have in mind, but don't just start and then get cold feet for good results.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Be more concerned with the big issues today instead of concentrating on the details so much of any enterprise you are involved.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You can today view your partner from a different and better angle at this time and come to a fine understanding with them.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be enthusiastic about accomplishing a good deal today and you can do just that and efficiently, also, Channel energies constructively.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Put dull duties aside and go after what is important in the business world and gain your aims. Also, Have a good time.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) If you use the right words at this time, you can easily get your family to do what you wish. Study your home for needed repairs.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a good day today to see as many persons as you can, whether for business or personal purposes and get good results.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Think over what you can do to have more success later this evening so that you need not worry about finances or monetary obligations.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

THE Daily Crossword by Eugene Puffenberger

ACROSS

- General at Gettysburg
- Having a dull, steady pain
- Stinging insect
- Shakespearean forest
- Fruit of the blackthorn
- Cigar ending
- Utopian
- Gone by
- Seed covering
- Automobile style
- Limit of a kind
- Czech city
- Stir up
- Practica of having a single mate
- Garman exclamation
- Papal cape
- Mysterious
- Boater
- Hops oven
- Once more
- Valley
- Explosive letters
- Effrontery
- The Norse gods
- Unknown fellow
- MD athlete
- Concurs
- Ancient ointment
- Goner
- Assignment
- Cloud of interstellar gas
- Mild oath
- Columist
- Barrett
- Cuttlefish ink
- Ms. James
- U.S. chemist
- Violent one: var.
- Laugh heartily
- Siliched
- In — (forthcoming)

DOWN

- Armor
- Earth goddess
- Yemen port
- Kind of lock
- Blow up
- Cleopatra's undoing
- Attired
- Hebrew prophat
- One more time
- Open courts
- Assignment
- Martini
- Actress Merkel
- Gaming cubes
- The end
- Dabatable
- Algerian port
- Cartoonist
- Thomas
- Leavening agent
- Gona up
- Hinged lastener
- Others: Lal.
- Sea bird
- Bright star
- Lazy, idle
- Collection
- Takes into custody
- Civil rights worker, Evers
- Bled, like madras
- Snake
- Alliance acronym
- Anita or Barbara
- Make points
- Flacognized
- snuff (adequate)
- Ananias
- Beme's river
- Author Rland

Yesterday's puzzle solved

ASST OAVIS OGRE
HOUR ELITE DROP
ELLA CASED DADS
MOUNTARARAT NEO
CON STARDOM
MOMENTUM EMIT
ALA SETON EBER T
LETS RAPID STAR
TOTEM HELEN ORAY
EROS DEMORNAY
PARENTS ERE
ASH KILIMANJARO
SPOT LOMAN EWER
TIRE TORTE CAIN
ACNE SPEED TYNE

Peanuts

YES, SIR... I'D LIKE TO BUY A BOX OF CRAYONS FOR MY DOG.

HE NEEDS A BOX WITH LOTS OF BLUES, AND YELLOWS, AND GREENS.

HE LIKES TO COLOR BIG BLUE SKIES, BRIGHT SUNS, AND BEAUTIFUL LAWN.

HAPPY PICTURES!

Andy Capp

ANY TALK OF FLO COMING BACK TO YOU?

NOT A WHISPER, CHALKIE.

ARE YOU COPIING ME WITH THE COOKING?

JUST ABOUT.

JUST ABOUT. HE USES THE SMOKE ALARMA AS A TIMER.

Mutt'n'Jeff

HA, WAIT UNTIL JEFF SEES MY NEW CAR! HE'LL CRY WITH ENVY!

HI, MUTT! WHAT'S NEW?

NOTHIN'!

HELLO, SIR SIDNEY! THANKS FOR LENDING ME YOUR CAR!



Chicago Bulls' Scottie Pippen drives around Orlando Magic's Horace Grant during first quarter action at the United Centre (Reuters photo)

Bulls trounce Magic 111-91

CHICAGO (R) — In what may well be a preview of the NBA's Eastern Conference finals, Toni Kukoc came off the bench to score 24 points and Michael Jordan added 23 as the Chicago Bulls improved to 25-0 at home with a 111-91 blowout of the Orlando Magic.

"I felt great tonight," said Kukoc, who shot 8-of-11 from the field, including six three-pointers. "I was in the zone."

"When you're like that you just shoot the ball, doesn't matter who is in front of you. It just goes in."

Said Chicago coach Phil Jackson: "Obviously they had matchup problems with Kukoc and when he shoots as well as he did today we are always going to be tough to beat."

The Bulls, who were coming off a defeat in Miami, improved to a league-best 49-6, while Atlantic Division-leading Orlando, which is also unbeaten at home, fell to 40-15.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 33 points and grabbed 16 rebounds and Penny Hardaway added 23 points for the Magic, who had a six-game winning streak snapped.

Scottie Pippen and Luc Longley each scored 14 points while Dennis Rodman pulled down 17 rebounds for the Bulls.

At Phoenix, Charles Barkley scored 25 points and grabbed 16 rebounds to lead the resurgent Suns to a 113-105 win over the injury-depleted New York Knicks.

Kevin Johnson added 24 points on 10-of-15 shooting for the Suns, winner of four straight games and seven of eight.

The Knicks, playing without injured starters Patrick Ewing and Charles Oakley, lost for the fifth time in seven games.

J.R. Reid led New York with 22 points. A.C. Green, who has played

in 784 consecutive games, had two teeth knocked out and was hospitalized with a possible fractured jaw after being hit by Reid in the fourth quarter.

At Minnesota, Grant Long had 24 points and 13 rebounds to lead the Atlanta Hawks to a 92-76 rout of the Timberwolves, who put on their worst offensive performance of the season.

The result made for a happy homecoming for Christian Laettner, whom the Hawks acquired in a trade last Thursday. Laettner scored four of his seven points in an 8-0 fourth-quarter spurt that sealed the game.

Atlanta held Minnesota to season lows in points and field-goal percentage (31.7 per cent). The Hawks also allowed just 11 points in the final period, matching the fewest ever scored by the T-wolves in a fourth quarter.

At Washington, Juwan Howard had 25 points and 14 rebounds and Brent Price added 21 points as the Bulls beat the Milwaukee Bucks 111-103 to snap a three-game losing streak.

The loss spoiled the efforts of Milwaukee's Vin Baker, who had 35 points and a career-high 21 rebounds.

Milwaukee pulled within 84-78 on Baker's jumper with 7:38 to go but could get no closer. Price, who also had nine assists, scored 11 points in the fourth quarter as Washington put the game

away.

In Los Angeles, Sam Perkins scored 22 points and Shawn Kemp added 21 and 17 rebounds as the Seattle SuperSonics extended their winning streak to 10 games with a 106-101 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Detlef Schrempf added 19 for the Sonics, who never trailed.

The win overshadowed a career-best 30 points by Clippers rookie Brent Barry, who also made six steals but couldn't prevent his team from dropping its fourth in a row.

In Vancouver, David Robinson scored seven of his 20 points in the final four minutes as the San Antonio Spurs moved into a tie for first place with Utah in the Midwest Division with a 95-84 victory over the Grizzlies.

Sean Elliott scored 29 points for the Spurs, who have won five of their last six games. Bryant Reeves had 22 points and 10 rebounds for the Grizzlies, losers of 10 of 11 games.

In Miami, newly acquired Tim Hardaway scored 20 points to lead six players in double figures as the Heat handed the Philadelphia 76ers their seventh straight loss, 108-101.

Kurt Thomas added 18 points and 11 rebounds and Walt Williams, also playing his first game for the Heat, scored 12 points, all of three-pointers.

RESULTS

Chicago	111
Washington	111
Atlanta	92
Phoenix	113
San Antonio	95
Miami	108
Detroit	93
New Jersey	111
Dallas	105
Seattle	106

Orlando	91
Milwaukee	103
Minnesota	76
New York	105
Vancouver	84
Philadelphia	101
Portland	81
Boston	105
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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMMAM HIRSH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AKJ554 ♠ Q76 ♠ OVD AA1072

The bidding has proceeded: WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH 17 20 Pass 24 Pass 24

What action do you take?

A - If left to play there, we are sure that two diamonds wouldn't even be your second-best suit! But what can you do about it? Partner would have doubled with any interest in spades, so all you can do is pass and hope for the best.

Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AA7 ♠ AQ473 ♠ J6 A10763

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST 10 10 Pass 24 Pass 24

What do you bid now?

A - So far, you have done no more than confirm a minimum opening bid with a club preference. What partner has in mind is an open

question, but it cannot damage your interests to now pinpoint your side strength. Bid three spades.

Q. 3 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AQ84 ♠ AK873 ♠ 876 A5

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST 1a Pass 20 Pass 47

A - If you play that partner's jump raise is strong, then you are surely worth a move. Since you have nothing to cue-bid, we suggest you show your spade fragment by bidding four spades. However, we won't quibble with a raise over game of five hearts. If your initial response promised game-going values, however, pass.

Q. 4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AK1076 ♠ 8532 ♠ Q1090 A3

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST 1a 10 Pass 20 Pass 24

What action do you take?

A - Partner's reverse shows a good hand, but there's a strong possibility that some of your spade values might be wasted. You can tell partner that you have a good hand with a strong holding in spades by jumping to three no trump.

United turn up heat with six-goal demolition

LONDON (AFP) — A blistering start and a late flourish in a 6-0 demolition of basement club Bolton saw Manchester United close the gap on Premiership leaders Newcastle to just four points on Sunday.

Goals from David Beckham, Steve Bruce, Andy Cole, Nicky Butt and two from late substitute Paul Scholes sealed a masterful performance from the Red Devils whose title challenge appeared dead and buried only a few weeks ago.

Newcastle, who dropped two vital points in a 3-3 draw at Manchester City on Saturday, still have a game in hand over United.

But the two teams now face each other at St. James Park on Monday March 4th in what is already being billed as the championship decider.

"It will be a tremendous match with a great atmosphere. I am really looking forward to it and we are going into it at just the right time," said United manager Alex Ferguson.

A moment of sublime skill from Welsh winger Ryan Giggs, who has been in sparkling form recently, set United on the way after just five minutes.

Juggling the ball from foot to foot, Giggs advanced on the Bolton box, before lifting the ball over the advancing defence and volleying a dipping shot onto the cross bar for Beckham to head home the rebound.

United went two up 10 minutes later when Bruce got in behind Bolton's static defence to head home a Beckham corner before Cole made the game safe 20 minutes from time, side-stepping Simon Coleman to net off the bar.

Scholes made a sensational entry scoring twice within six minutes of coming on as a replacement for Eric Cantona.

Butt, inspirational in midfield throughout, put the sixth nail in the Wanderers' coffin right at the death after a good link-up with

Cole.

Looking ahead to the big showdown with the leaders at St. James' Park, man-of-the-match Roy Keane said: "It's an important game for both clubs but we really need to go up there and win and we're very confident. "We beat them at Old Trafford quite comfortably early in the season and we're very confident we can go up there and get three points."

Earlier, African stars Phil Masinga and Tony Yeboah fired Leeds into their first Wembley final in 23 years as the Premiership side saw off First Division Birmingham 3-0 in the second leg of the League Cup semi final.

Brian Deane headed the third for a 5-1 aggregate win that sends Leeds into their first domestic final — against Aston Villa on March 24 — since they lost the infamous 1973 FA Cup final to second division Sunderland.

Leeds boss Howard Wilkinson savoured the prospect of the trip to Wembley, saying: "It's what you want to do when you start off as a player and then when you start off as a manager and for me personally it's been something of a holy grail."

"It's a very big day for me but I'm sure it is for the club too, because it's been 23 years since we've been to Wembley for a final."

"There have been eight managers since then and some of those years have been very barren ones," he added.

There was also great personal satisfaction for goalscorer 17-goal Yeboah who arrived at Leeds from Eintracht Frankfurt at the start of last year.

He said: "Ever since I was a child in Ghana the thought of going to Wembley just to be a spectator has been a personal dream."

"Now I'm going there for real, not just to watch but to play in a final and I couldn't be more happy."

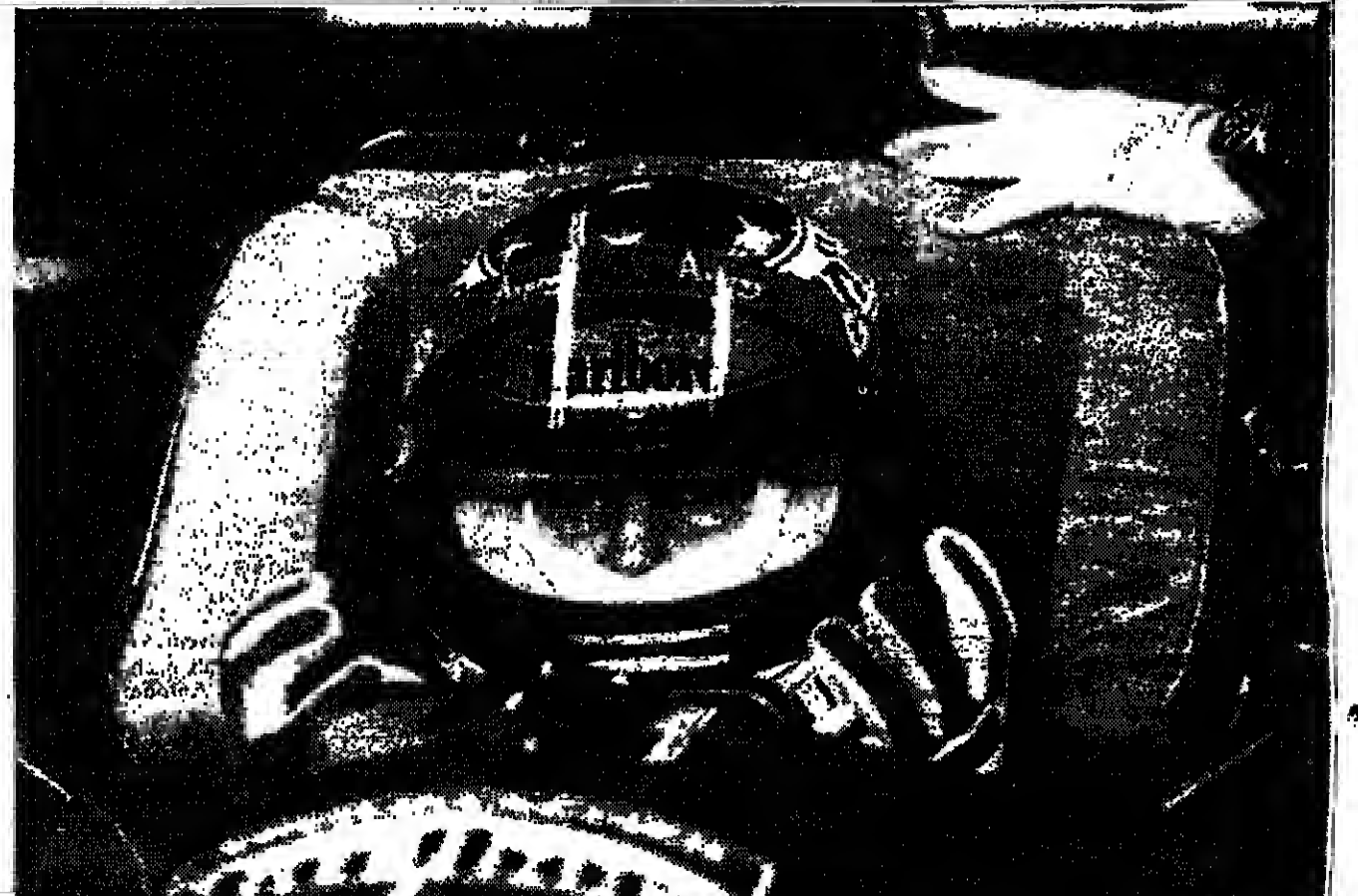
Schumacher not satisfied with Estoril practice

ESTORIL (AFP) — Formula One world champion Michael Schumacher finished Ferrari's practice session here on Sunday and said that they hadn't had enough practice to sort out the car's problems.

Schumacher, who was able to complete 38 laps in the morning (best time of 1min-23.88 sec) but heavy rain forced the cancellation of the afternoon session, said: "We have completed 400 kilometres with the new car which is better than nothing. But it's still too little to sort out the 'bigging' problems."

Ferrari has had a troubled time at Estoril, Schumacher has not practiced some days and on one occasion had to test in the old car.

His best time was some two seconds slower than major rival Williams' Damon Hill, twice runner-up to Schumacher.



World champion German driver Michael Schumacher in his new Formula 1 Ferrari F310 as he tests his car in Estoril circuit before the opening round of this year's F1 World Championships at Melbourne, Australia on March 10 (Reuters photo)

Gascoigne keeps Rangers on course

GLASGOW (AFP) — England star Paul Gascoigne helped keep Rangers on course for an eighth successive Premier division title in an ill-tempered 1-0 victory at Aberdeen on Sunday.

Gascoigne's 32nd minute penalty secured victory for Walter Smith's side taking them three points clear of Old Firm rivals Celtic, who had drawn level on points after Saturday's 4-0 demolition of Partick.

But victory did not come easily in a tension-packed afternoon with referee Hugh Dallas producing his yellow card nine times.

Gascoigne collected his tenth domestic booking of the season but his 12th goal clinched victory as Rangers missed a series of other chances before withstanding a late Aberdeen rally.

It was a third booking in four games for the England midfielder who is moving closer to a three-match ban.

Now with nine games left Rangers are still out in front with Celtic due at Ibrox on Sunday, March 17, in what looks a championship decider.

Aberdeen went into the match aiming to prove there is life after rising Scotland star Eoin Jess, sold this week to English Premiership strugglers Coventry City.

Scot Booth was the replacement with Stephen Glass reverting to left-back.

Dean Windass missed a closer-range chance when Andy Goram pushed out a Glass free-kick and then Billy Dodds, who collected a booking, shot wide.

Mutola sets another indoor world record

STOCKHOLM (R) — Maria Mutola of Mozambique set a women's 1,000 metres indoor world record for the second time in two weeks when she clocked two minutes 31.23 seconds at an international athletics meeting on Sunday.

Mutola, 23, improved her own record of 2:32.08, which she set in Birmingham, England, on February 10.

When she last competed in Sweden, in the 1995 World Championships, she won the 800 metres gold medal.

From the starting gun, Mutola was right on the shoulder of Danish pacemaker Karen Gydesen, who set a world record pace of 28.3 seconds after 200 metres and 58.2 after 400.

Midway through the race, Mutola took the lead as Gydesen dropped out and ran alone for the rest of it. She was timed in 1:28.9 at 600 metres and 2:00.4 after 800 and finished well ahead of runner-up Bulgarian Natalya Dukhnova who clocked 2:37.55.

Surinam's Letitia Vriesde was third in 2:38.79.

"When I was young, I never liked running," admitted Mutola, who now looks forward to a break before preparing for this summer's Atlanta Olympic Games.

"I am thinking about entering the 1,500 metres in the

Olympics, but the 800 comes first," she said, adding that she is still aiming for the world record in that event.

"But it's very, very tough. My primary goal is to get down to 1:54 and keep working on it from there."

The world 800 metres record is 1:53.28, set by Czech Jarmila Kratochvilova in July, 1983.

Jamaica's Merlene Ottey won the women's 60 metres in 7.14 seconds, saying she was happy to have finished her indoor career with a win.

"This was my last indoor race ever, and I will probably retire this year," said Ottey, adding that "a 100 metres gold medal in Atlanta could make me change my mind."

Ottey's fellow-Jamaican Donovan Powell set a stadium record when he won the men's 60 metres in 6.56 seconds, just inside Canadian Donovan Bailey's previous best of 6.57.

Courtney Hawkins beat fellow-American world champion Allen Johnson in the 60 metres hurdles, clocking 7.54 seconds against Johnson's 7.70.

Denmark's world 800 metres champion Wilson Kipketer won the 1,000 metres in 2:17.08 in a close race with Moroccan Mahjoub Haida, who finished in 2:17.17.



Italy's Alberto Tomba clips a gate as he skis down the Neveros course during the first run of the men's slalom race in the Alpine skiing world championships on Sunday (Reuters photo)

Tomba crowns championships with 2nd gold

SIERRA NEVADA (AFP) — Alberto Tomba provided a fitting spectacle as he took the last gold medal, his second, here at the world medals were equalled by Sweden's Pernilla Wiberg.

Unlike Tomba, who only races slalom and giant slalom, she competed in all disciplines and was given an Audi car as the best racer of the championships.

Wiberg's golds in combined and slalom provided her with her fifth championship and Olympic gold medals. Tomba has one Olympic gold, two silvers, two world championship golds and a bronze.

Tomba's back-to-back wins

will draw comparisons with Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark but the Italian admitted he has a way to go to catch the best ever gate racer.

Delayed a year because of lack of snow in 1995, the championships went off with few hitches, except disruptions resulting from all the four downhill being scheduled on the one hill.

"We have learned something here," said FIS General-Secretary Gian-Franco Kasper. "In future, even next year at Cortina, we will make sure there are two alternatives for the downhill."

Competition opened with a Nordic sweep of the men's

Super-G medals and gold for Norwegian Atle Skjardal.

Both men's and women's Super-G's needed the soft touch and Italy's Isolde Kostner won the women's, laying the foundations for Italy's storm of medals.

Austria's Patrick Ortlieb won both downhill gold and icon status in his ski-mad country. Ortlieb is one of only five skiers to win both Olympic downhill gold and the world championship title.

American Picabo Street won the women's downhill.

After weather disruptions the combined events were eventually won by Wiberg and five times overall World Cup winner, Marc Girardelli.

Coetzer loses Oklahoma final

OKLAHOMA CITY (R) — Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands used her big serve to overpower third-seeded South African Amanda Coetzer Sunday as she successfully defended her title at the IGA tennis classic.

The second-seeded Schultz-McCarthy belted 14 aces in the convincing 6-3 6-2 victory over Coetzer, who had upset top seed Chanda Rubin to reach the final.

"The whole week I was able to play my game," said the towering Dutchwoman,

who compiled 57 aces for the week and earned \$29,000 for her sixth career title on the WTA tour.

She took control early in both sets, breaking Coetzer's serve for a 4-1 lead in the first and jumping out to a commanding 5-1 advantage in the second set of the 71-minute contest.

The victor's overpowering performance was surprising given the fact that she had played a doubles match that went until almost midnight

on Saturday.

"I was a little tired today," she admitted. "That helped me focus more. I didn't want to get in a three-set match with a lot of long rallies."

Coetzer said her own serve let her down.

"I knew I had to try and serve well," she said. "I lost my serve in both sets. There was too much pressure."

"Brenda played very well. You have to come up with so many solid points (to beat her)."



Michael Stich of Germany (left) holds his trophy as Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia looks on after Stich won the final of the European Community Championships in Antwerp (Reuters photo)

Stich ends Ivanisevic's winning streak

ANTWERP (R) — German Michael Stich snapped the winning streak of Croat Goran Ivanisevic by taking the European Community Tennis Championship title on Sunday.

Ivanisevic, the pre-match favorite who had won the titles in Zagreb and Dubai in recent weeks, was beaten 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7-5) in 84 minutes by Stich, the sixth seed who was playing only his second tournament since tearing a ligament in his left ankle last

October.

The 27-year-old German, ranked 13th in the world, dominated from the net in the first two sets in a battle between two big servers who together had hit more than 120 aces in their four previous matches here.

Third seed and world number nine Ivanisevic, who saw a winning streak of 14 matches halted, squandered most of his volleys but recovered his poise after saving two break points in the third

game of the third set.

Stich — and the crowd — had a major scare when the German slipped and fell heavily in the sixth game of the third set.

He lay motionless on his back for a few seconds before he was helped on his feet by Ivanisevic. He appeared unhurt.

It was the first ATP title for Stich, the 1991 Wimbledon champion, since he took the Los Angeles title last August.

Batistuta keeps Fiorentina in title race

PSG set up crisis committee; Atletico manage win

PARIS (Agencies) — Paris Saint Germain's recent poor run has reached crisis proportions at boardroom level as club officials set up an emergency committee on Sunday to try and prevent their fifth consecutive defeat.

Coach Luis Fernandez, criticised recently for his line-ups, has seen his team lose four times since February 7. League losses to Monaco, Montpellier and Strasbourg preceded Saturday's 3-1 defeat at Auxerre in the French Cup.

It is their worst run since four successive league losses in 1989 — to Caen, Mulhouse, Lyon, and Marseille. And PSG's current form is just one loss away from their worst ever league runs — five consecutive defeats in both the 1984/85 and 1987/88 seasons.

Despite the action by anxious PSG officials, the club are nevertheless still top of the league.

However, some would say their situation was precarious as second-placed Auxerre trail by three points with a game in hand. And third placed Metz, four points behind PSG, have two games in hand.

The committee will be chaired by club supremo Michel Denisot, with club president Bernard Brochand, vice-president Alain Cayzac, Jean-Francois Domergue and Jean-Michel Moutier also included.

The committee's role is to help Fernandez reach the goals set at the start of the season — win the French League and the European Cup Winners Cup.

PSG's next matches are against Lens on Tuesday, at Rennes on March 2, before the first leg of their European Cup Winners Cup quarter-final at Parma on March 7.

And Fernandez is under extreme pressure as there is already talk of Joel Batistuta's former keeper, taking over as coach if results do not improve.

George Weah's 10th goal of the season ensured visitors AC Milan held champions Juventus for a 1-1 draw in the Italian championship. Antonio Conte scored for Juventus with a 25-yard half-volley in the fourth minute before Liberian world footballer of the year Weah headed an equaliser from a Roberto Donadoni cross from the left on the half-hour.

However Fiorentina closed the gap from seven to five points as two goals from Gabriel Batistuta helped Fiorentina thrash Napoli 3-0.

Argentina's Batistuta, who scored in his first 11 games for Fiorentina last season — a Serie A record — hit home in the 38th and 72nd minutes, with Francesco Baiano rounding off the scoring with a quarter-hour to go.

And Batistuta has now joined Bari's Igor Protti at the top of the goalscoring list with 16 goals.

Lazio closed the gap on third placed Parma as they won 3-1 at lowly Padova — Parma could only manage a goalless draw at Udinese.

Parma are now three points ahead of the Roma club.

Giuseppe Signori hit his 15th goal of the season for Lazio 10 minutes before the break and Pierluigi Casiraghi and Diego Fuser added the other two.

Croatian Goran Vlaovic hit an 89th minute penalty as consolidation for Padova.

Inter Milan's Marco Branca, a midseason recruit from AS Roma, scored the only goal of the match and his 13th of the season in their home win over Atlanta.

Bayern Munich moved level on points with German league leaders Dortmund on Sunday as they thrashed Uerdingen 6-1. Dortmund still lead, however, as they have played one match less.

On Saturday, Dortmund had only their second loss of the season, and first at home, as Rostock earned their second league victory this season against Dortmund with a 2-1 win.

Bayern Munich, who had lost their previous two matches, bounced back with a increased motivation to notch up their convincing win. Thomas Helmer, Jurgen Klinsmann, Alexander Zickler, Mehmet Schull and Thomas Strunz (2) all found the net for the visitors.

However Dortmund were always chasing the game in their encounter.

Steffen Baumgartner opened the scoring for Rostock just before the break, and Akpobor double the score in the 54th minute. Czech midfielder Patrik Berger pulled one back for Dortmund two minutes later as consolation.

In Spain, Atletico Madrid's Jose Luis Caminero hit a late winner to beat Celta Vigo 3-2 and conserve their eight-point lead at the top over Barcelona, who beat Betis



Argentine player Abel Balbo (left) of Roma match Roma vs Torino for the Italian first division in Rome. Roma won 1-0.

1-0.

However Barcelona left it till the 85th minute to get their goal at the Nou Camp Stadium through Bosnia-Herzegovina striker Mehmed Kodro.

Third-placed Compostela only just scraped a 3-3 draw at home to Real Madrid when Hernandez Virallito scored just seconds before the final whistle.

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Suicide attacks cut Labour lead in opinion polls

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Popular support for the Israeli right soared Monday after the country suffered its worst ever suicide bombing, dealing a blow to Prime Minister Shimon Peres' chances in upcoming elections widely seen as a referendum on the peace process.

A snap poll published Monday showed the Labour Party chief lead over his main right-wing rival, Benjamin Netanyahu, slashed to three points, compared to 15 just before militants killed 25 people in a double bombing on Sunday which also left two suicide assailants dead.

The poll by the Dahaf Institute for the Yediot Aharonot newspaper showed 43 per cent support for Mr. Netanyahu, head of the Likud party and a fierce critic of the Palestinian autonomy accords. Mr. Peres' 46 per cent.

The survey must be viewed with caution in that it was taken while emotions were still high following the bombings.

But it highlighted the fragility of the Labour Party's popularity in recent months and the sensitivity of public opinion to threats to Israel's security.

Sunday's suicide attack was the deadliest in Israel's history and just the kind of blow feared by the Labour leaders who negotiated the land-for-peace agreements with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Mr. Peres' decision to move up the next general elections from Oct. 10 to May 29 was an attempt to avoid just such shocks.

"Fate always strikes back at Peres just when he is soaring," lamented one senior official in the prime minister's office, referring to a particularly worrisome precedent for the Labour leader — a bombing in Jericho just days before 1988 elections which wiped out a 10-point lead in opinion polls and sent Mr. Peres down to defeat.

Mr. Peres admitted to journalists last week that only

another such attack could undermine his chances in the May 29 polls.

"We have all the cards to win these elections, unless there is a terrorist attack," he said.

The right set a precedent of its own Sunday in not seeking immediate partisan gain from the carnage.

Mr. Netanyahu, clearly conscious that Israeli attitudes have changed dramatically since the November assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, called for national unity and calm in respect for the dead.

Unlike after previous bombings, Mr. Netanyahu refrained from calling protest demonstrations against the government's peace policies and most other conservative leaders shared his restraint by not visiting the bombing sites.

Foreign Minister Ehud Barak saw the right's reaction as proof "that Israelis have become more mature. The Rabin assassination has changed the way they see things."

Likud and other conservative parties saw their standing in the polls collapse after the killing, notably due to charges that their virulent anti-government attacks had helped incite the murder by a Jewish radical.

Labour party officials are hoping that right-wing fears of a similar backlash will keep conservatives from trying to profit too openly from Sunday's double bombing.

The tragedy will nevertheless provide ammunition for Mr. Netanyahu when he resumes campaigning following the traditional week of mourning.

Some of his close allies, including former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, have already given a foretaste of what to expect.

Already on Sunday Mr. Shamir was declaring that the suicide attack by the Hamas movement "proves once again that the agreements with the PLO are a catastrophe for Israel."

Saddam personally shot dead defectors — report

DUBAI (AFP) — President Saddam Hussein on Sunday revived doubts over whether he can be trusted for any deals with the United Nations after he lured back defectors with promises of a pardon that failed to spare their lives.

General Hussein Kamel, a former industry minister who disclosed arms and other secrets after defecting to Jordan, and his brother Saddam Kamel, a former security chief, were shot dead in Baghdad on Friday.

Amid a stream of condemnation from Washington, other capitals and the Iraqi opposition, the Gulf News daily said Sunday: "The world will deplore the manner in which they were offered pardons and then summarily punished."

"The international community will ask the question all over again how much credence can be attached to any of the 'promises' that the Baghdad regime has made so far," the English-language newspaper in the United Arab Emirates said.

The Gulf News added that "it is a matter of constant doubt" whether Baghdad will honour the terms of the ceasefire ending the 1991 Gulf war, which calls for the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

It also asked if Baghdad would "keep its side of the deal" if it agrees to a U.N. resolution allowing it to export \$1 billion worth of oil every quarter to buy only food and medicine, it said.

Iraq began technical meetings in New York on Feb. 6 to discuss U.N. Resolution 986 which would allow limited oil exports under strict international control. A second round is expected to begin next month.

Two U.N. teams investigating Iraq's chemical and germ warfare programmes arrived in Iraq on Saturday and "started working as soon as they arrived," U.N. officials said.

The 14-member chemical weapons team are to spend a week in Baghdad to "verify information presented last year by Baghdad to the U.N. Special Commission (UN-

SCOM) charged with dismantling Iraq and to travel to certain sites," an official said.

In New York, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, said: "the whole way that they were welcomed and pardoned and murdered shows a great deal about the way Saddam Hussein believes that he deals with people."

"Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator and his brutality knows no bounds," Ms. Albright added.

In Tehran, the head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer Al Hakim, rejected official Iraqi reports the defectors were killed by relatives seeking to restore family honour.

Sheikh Hakim told the newspaper Iran News that President Saddam was known for reneging on promises, adding the Iraqi government never respected its commitments, laws or morality.

Iraq, which fought an eight-year war with Iraq in the 1980s and shelters SCIRI and other Iraqi opposition groups, also implied that Baghdad was behind the murders.

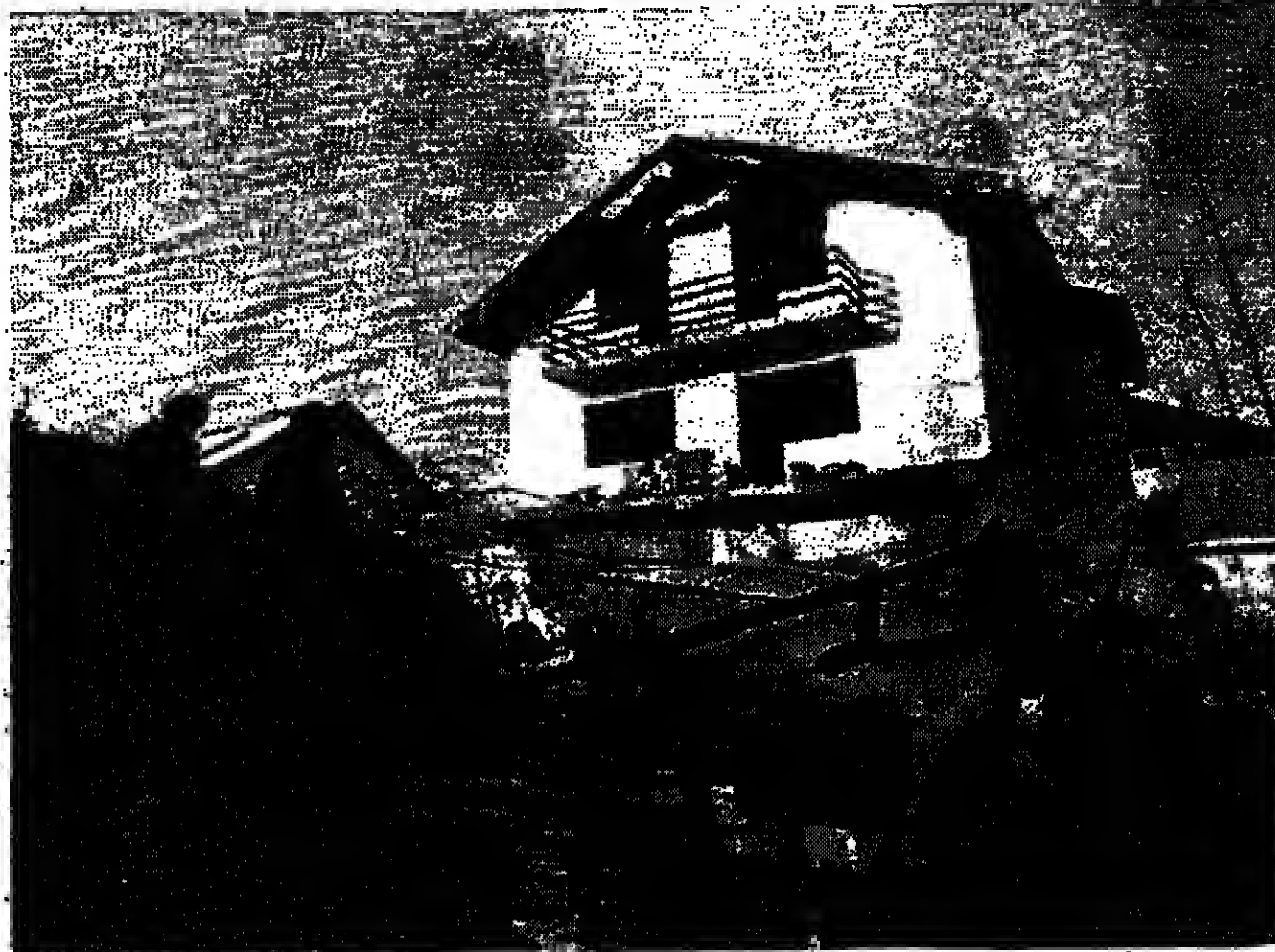
Hussein Kamel, 37, and his brother Saddam Kamel, 35, returned to Iraq on Tuesday with the blessing of their father-in-law, Saddam Hussein, following six months in exile in Jordan.

The two, another brother Hakim and their father were killed on Friday during an inter-family shootout which left five others dead at Hussein Kamel's home in Baghdad, according to official Iraqi accounts.

The location of the defectors' bodies was not disclosed.

King Hussein said on Sunday that he was "disgusted" by the murder of the defectors.

Hussein Kamel had called for the overthrow of the Saddam government during a press conference in Amman and had provided information to the United Nations on Iraq's secret programme for conventional weapons.



Bosnian Serbs drive a cart in front of a burnt house in the Serb-held Sarajevo suburb of Ilidja on Monday. Ilidja is the second of five Sarajevo suburbs scheduled to be transferred from Bosnia's Serb republic to the Muslim-Croat federation by March 20 (Reuters photo)

Hamas seen open to consider end to anti-Israeli suicide bombings

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Hamas fighters, boosted by two deadly suicide strikes against Israel, have issued the clearest signal ever they could be willing to abandon attacks against the Jewish state, Palestinian analysts said Monday.

Hamas claimed responsibility for the double suicide bombings Sunday which killed 27 people, saying the attacks were revenge for Israel's January slaying of Yabya Ayash, the Hamas bomb-maker known as the engineer.

But the Hamas group which carried out the attack also indicated in a leaflet issued Sunday that the bombings could be their last if the Israeli government was "serious" about peace.

"This is something we can take very seriously," said Ziyad Abu Amr, a Bir Zeit University specialist on the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas.

"Hamas has restored its credibility, avenged Yehiya Ayash, and shown it can hit the Israelis," he said.

"It has demonstrated that if it abandons this tactic, it will do so from a position of strength."

The bombings in Jerusalem and the southern city of

Ashkelon, which killed 27 people, including the bombers, were not a sign of new militancy but a direct act of revenge, said Mr. Abu Amr, a newly elected member of the Palestinian council.

Israel's killing of Ayash made it difficult for those opposed to violent attacks in the movement to argue against bombings, analysts said.

Still, they stressed, the leaflet issued after the bombings includes a clear invitation to bargaining with Israel, for the first time ever without setting impossible conditions.

"If the government of Israel is serious in its peace project it should stop its terrorism against Hamas and release our prisoners immediately," said the leaflet, which was signed the "Yahya Ayash Units — New Generation."

"Then we will adopt a historic position where we will be the party most keen on not having one drop of blood shed in the land of Palestine," it said.

The bombings came after Hamas had refrained from striking Israeli targets for six months as part of a tacit agreement with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) headed by Yasset

Arafat.

"I think that they after what consider to be a successful attack they are saying maybe it is time to start bargaining (with Israel) from a position of strength," Ghasan Khatib, head of the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre, said.

Hamas leaders have good reasons to refrain from further armed attacks, analysts said.

However, militants who moved to the fore during the intifada uprising continue to argue in favour of bombings.

The reasons for a halt include avoiding arrest and crackdowns by Palestinian authorities, the need to freely build up Hamas social institutions in PNA areas, and interest in ensuring that municipal elections, are held this spring in the West Bank and Gaza Strip so the movement can show its popularity.

Not most of the attacks popular among the Palestinian public because they kill civilians and lead to costly Israeli military closures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, analysts say.

"Hamas is a political movement interested in its continued survival. They do

(Continued on page 7)

Serbs continue exodus from Sarajevo

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Thousands of weary Serbs on Monday began leaving their homes in Sarajevo districts that are to come under the control of the Muslim-led Bosnian government, evacuated by the Bosnian Serb army under the eye of NATO peacekeepers.

Loading their belongings into trucks, cars and carts, thousands of others have left Sarajevo in recent days fearing reprisals by their former enemies, the Muslims, when their homes fall again into areas under Muslim control in March.

Most of the Serbs, many of them elderly and unfit to pack up their homes, are heading for Serb-held towns in eastern Bosnia, including the northeastern town of Brcko — a town still claimed under the Dayton peace agreement by the Muslim-led government.

Early Monday, at least 40 Serb military trucks headed from Serb barracks outside Sarajevo to the grimy suburb of Ilidja to start loading up with people wishing to leave.

When they arrived in the suburb, where an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 people remain, they found small groups of people waiting, huddled together, complaining of the wait.

"Yesterday (Sunday), we got bread but everyday we walk like this in the streets for the whole day and wait for transport," said Vojka Rosuljas, a small, thin 54-year-old woman, in Ilidja.

Both Ms. Rosuljas and her friend, Vinka Kovacevic, said they had lost family members in the war and were afraid to stay and wait for the return of the Bosnian government authority.

Back at the barracks, dozens of people, numb with cold, their hair stiff with ice, bad meanwhile spent the night out of doors waiting in the hope of reserving a place on the trucks for them and their belongings to be transported away from "Muslim Sarajevo."

Outside the Serb barracks, French armoured personnel carriers and light tanks of the NATO-led peace Implementation Force (IFOR) were posted to provide security on the road to Ilidja which passes through government-controlled Sarajevo.

IFOR spokesman Major Tom Moyer said that IFOR — sensitive to accusations that it is helping in another operation of "ethnic cleansing" — was "not providing an escort though it will have a strong presence along the route."

International aid agencies have, however, distanced themselves from the operation, saying the hard-line Bosnian Serb leadership has intentionally misled its people in order to get them to leave their homes, whipping up fears of the Muslim authorities.

The ethnic problems of Bosnia were meanwhile being discussed in Croatia, where the Bosnian and Croatian prime ministers met for talks.

Bosnian Prime Minister Hasan Muratovic on Sunday told Bosnian radio he hoped the talks help improve the sometimes strained relations of the two countries and said he would ask Croatia to bring the hard-line Bosnian Croats into line on a string of agreements, notably over the troubled southern town of Mostar.

Mostar, once a beautiful town and tourist attraction, was shattered by 11 months of bitter Muslim-Croat fighting in 1993 and 1994 and has been since been divided between Muslims living on the devastated east side and Croats on the more prosperous west side.

In Sarajevo, doctors caring for Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, who was hospitalized Thursday with heart trouble, said his health has continued to improve over the weekend.

In Tehran, the Iran News, English-language newspaper reported that Mr. Muratovic is to pay a three-day official visit to Iran starting Saturday to discuss bilateral ties and Islamic affairs.

Jordanians celebrate Kuwait's liberation

AMMAN (AP) — In a sign of improving ties, senior government officials crowded a lavish party held Sunday by the Kuwaiti embassy to mark the emirate's national day.

It was the first time that the Kuwaitis, whose relations with Jordan were strained during Iraq's occupation of their country, have held such a high profile celebration in Amman in six years.

Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti led the long line of current and former cabinet ministers who attended the two-hour reception at an Amman hotel decorated with the emirate's flags.

The prime minister sent a cable to his Kuwaiti counterpart, Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, to congratulate him on the 35th anniversary of Kuwait's independence, which coincides with its liberation from Iraqi occupation in February 1991.

Royal family members, including His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, Parliament deputies and trade and labour unionists also attended the reception.

Aftershocks continue to jolt Aqaba; no damages

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A moderate earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale shook the Gulf of Aqaba Monday morning, causing no damages or injuries, officials said.

The 30-second quake, which occurred at 9.20 a.m. was felt by Aqaba residents. Its epicentre was located 90 kilometres south of Aqaba, according to Abdul Kader Amar, director of the

Natural Resource Authority (NRA).

"This tremor was natural and was of the after-shocks of the earthquake which jolted the area on Nov. 22," Mr. Amar said.

He added that the area would continue to feel aftershocks for the next few months.

"We cannot predict when the series of aftershocks will come to an end, but based on past experience it might take up to six months before

the situation calms down," he added.

On Feb. 21, an earthquake, also measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale, hit the southern parts of Aqaba, causing no injuries or damages.

Captain Farid Share', director of the Public Relations Department at the Civil Defence Department (CDD), said that the situation in Aqaba was normal and no damages in the buildings or other facilities were reported.

An Aqaba housewife said: "We have got used to having earthquakes. We were not scared this time. As soon as we felt this one we ran to one corner of our house to protect ourselves from any objects that might fall."

Monday's earthquake also shook parts of Cairo and Israel from Tel Aviv to the southern port of Eilat, but there were no reports of injuries.

Darawshah to assure Yemen in island row

SANAA (R) — An Arab member of the Israeli parliament said on Monday he would assure Yemeni leaders that Israel was not involved in a dispute over Red Sea islands between Yemen and Eritrea.

Abdul Wahab Al Darawshah said he was not carrying a letter from Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh but that Mr. Peres had said Israel was neutral in the conflict.

"As Arabs, we asked the Israeli government to clarify its attitude on the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute and Peres has assured us that Israel's stand is a neutral one now and in the future on this dispute," Mr. Darawshah told Reuters.

"He told us that we can convey this attitude to President Saleh and the Yemeni government,"

Al Majd verdict set for March 18

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Higher Criminal Court said Sunday it will issue its verdict on March 18 in the case of the chief editor of Al Majd weekly, Fahed Rimawi, who is charged with disrupting the Kingdom's relations with Bahrain.

The charge against Mr. Rimawi is based on an article published in Al Majd last February by the exiled leader of the Bahraini popular committee, Abdul Rahman Nueimi, calling for the removal of the chief of the security in Bahrain, Ian Henderson, a Briton.

The article compared Mr. Henderson with John Bagot Glubb, the British commander of the Jordanian Armed Forces in the 1950s, who was removed from his post by His Majesty King Hussein in 1956.

Mr. Rimawi's case is based on a law that dates back to the 1960s and that has never been applied against journalists and writers. If found guilty, Mr.

Rimawi would face up to five years in prison.

Leading columnist Fahed Fanek, one of those who testified in the case, wrote in one of his articles that such a case "does not fit the democratic era." He said that the law on which the charge was based "has been frozen and has never been used even during the martial law era."

In a reply published in Al Bilad weekly in which Dr. Fanek wrote his editorial, Mohammad Amin, director of the Press and Publications Department, called on Dr. Fanek to thank the government for its tolerance for not using the law against journalists and writers instead of criticising it.

Mr. Amin said the article carried by Al Majd had serious implications on Jordanian-Bahraini relations and was the reason behind Bahrain's decision to cancel an agreement to employ 1,500 Jordanians there.

Witnesses in the case included former ministers of information Ibrahim Izzedine and Ziad Khasawneh. Mr. Izzedine, who was minister of state for Prime Ministry Affairs when the article was published, testified that the article did not inflame Jordanian-Bahraini relations.

The new cabinet of Abdul Karim Kabariti has promised sweeping changes in the Kingdom, including the setting up of a committee to investigate all cases filed by the government against journalists. But senior officials told the Jordan Times that the government did not intend to interfere in the affairs of the judicial authority, stressing the separation of powers and the independence of the judicial authority.

Mr. Rimawi said there were "positive gestures" from the new government towards enhancing democracy and promoting press freedoms. But, he said, they remained to be "just talk" for the time being.

COLUMN

Teenager resumes solo round-world bid

PERTH (R) — A 17-year-old Australian sailor left Fremantle Harbour Monday on his second attempt to become the youngest person to sail solo and non-stop around the world. David Dicks was forced to abort his first record bid last week, only three days into his journey, after a leak in his 10-metre yacht, Scaflight, damaged two of his long-range radios. The young sailor returned to Fremantle for repairs and further sea trials before resuming his record attempt. The record is held by American Robin Lee Graham, who left the west coast of America at the age of 16 in 1965 and took five years to sail around the world in his eight-metre sloop, Dove. Unlike Graham, who stopped in many ports, Dicks plans to make his journey non-stop and is carrying all the provisions needed for the expected eight months at sea. A small crowd of well-wishers and a flotilla of boats were present to bid farewell to the young adventurer, who hopes to complete the 26,780-nautical mile circumnavigation in October.

China park ends starvation threat on tigers

HONG KONG (R) — A troupe of Russian circus animals including 15 tigers and lions stranded in China in a business dispute have avoided starvation after a Chinese zoo agreed to feed them again, a newspaper reported Monday. The Shenzhen Safari Park, just over the border from Hong Kong, agreed to resume feeding the 31 animals after they went hungry for several days last week in a quarrel over payments and arrangements for the circus to return to Moscow. Circus trainer Edward Zapusny said representatives met the park's show manager Hu Yinglong Sunday and he had agreed to feed the animals, the South China Morning Post reported. Last week, the zoo stopped feeding the animals, claiming the circus had overstayed and was making unreasonable claims. "We think everything will be all right now," the Hong Kong paper quoted Mr. Zapusny as saying. "If all goes well with documentation, we are hoping to leave within four days or so." He said Mr. Hu also agreed to pay \$15,000 in compensation for three horses and two tigers that died during the circus's three-year performance contract, which ended last month. Independent Hong Kong veterinarian Gail Cochran went to Shenzhen last week to examine the animals. She said they were in relatively good health and that she was also attending meetings to try to help solve the dispute between the circus and the zoo, the newspaper said.

Vietnam's ban on firecrackers shows success

HANOI (AFP) — Vietnam's campaign to eradicate the use of firecrackers met with unprecedented success during last week's Tet Festival, when the death toll from explosives fell to zero for the first time. In Hanoi, the police were "100 per cent on duty" during the first two days of the festival and the operation to clamp down on firecrackers "represented a great victory," a police spokesman in the capital said Monday. Around 25 people were detained for minor offences in connection with firecrackers and the police registered 35 explosive-related offences. In Ho Chi Minh City, 34 people were detained for possession of firecrackers.